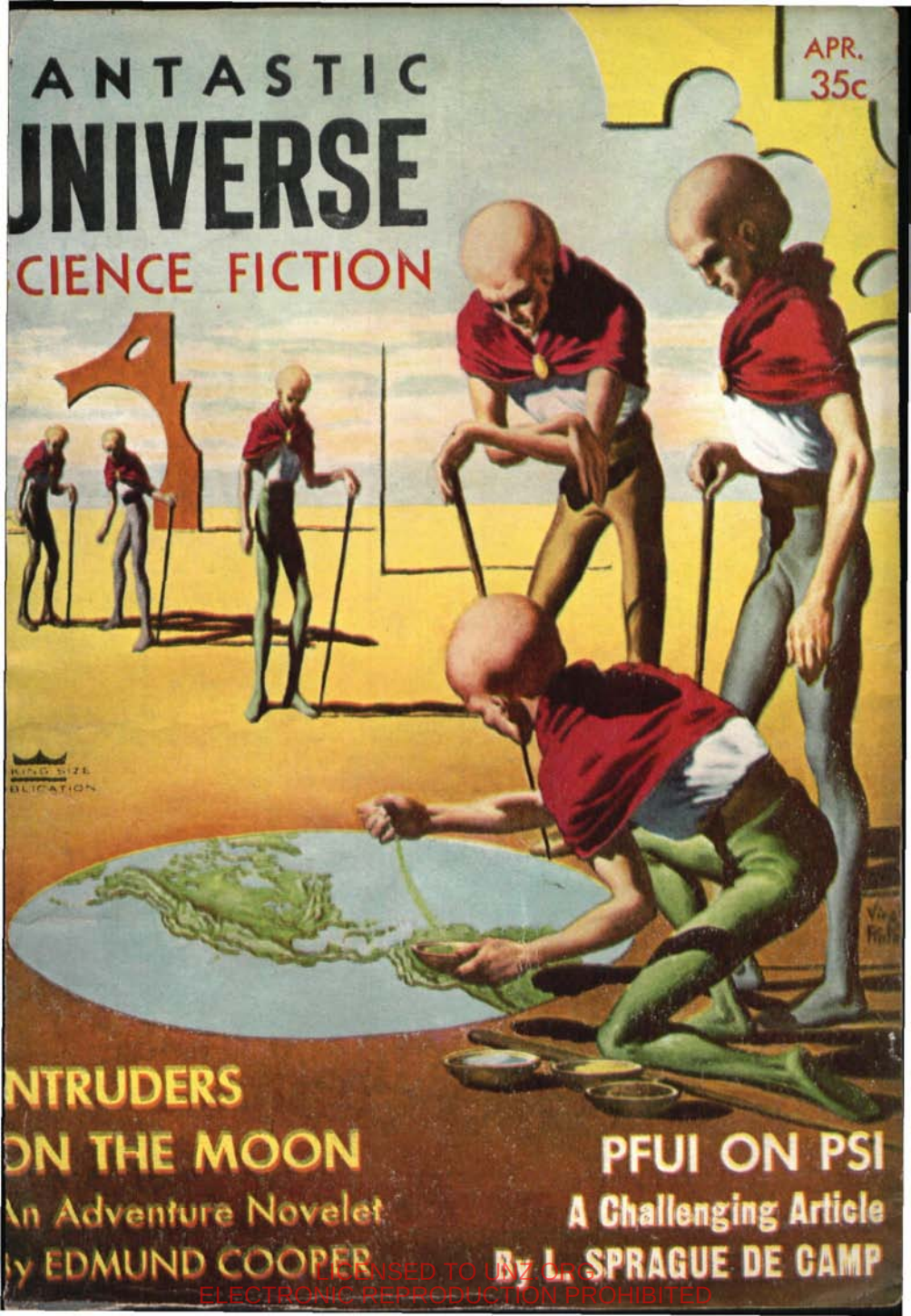

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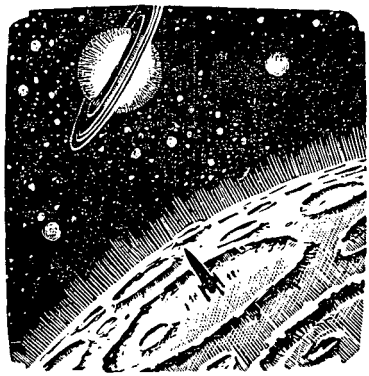

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FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, Vol. 7, No. 4. Published monthly by King-Size Publications, Inc., 320 Fifth Ave., N. Y. 1, N. Y. Subscription, 12 issues $3.75, single copies 35c. Foreign postage extra. Reentered as second-class matter at the post office, New York, N. Y. Additional entry, Holyoke, Mass. The characters in this magazine are entirely fictitious and have no relation to any persons living or dead. Copyright, 1957, by King-Size Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. April 1957. Printed in U.S.A.

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intruders on the moon

by...EDMUND COOPER

"The ship just crumpled. It was all I could do to switch oxygen and helium to full, and pray you'd pick me up—"

It was as if the universe had suddenly made up its mind to turn round. Slowly, impressively, shoals of pin-point diamonds, floating through a sea of total darkness, began to swim in orderly rhythm round the moonship. Presently, the earth swung like a Halloween lantern across the starboard bow, and the moon itself came dead astern.

Six hours ago, the moonship had crossed the neutral frontier in its long free fall through a quarter of a million miles of silence.

Now, after five days of zero gravity, the time for action had arrived.

The stars stopped turning, and the green earth-lantern hung itself on some invisible hook. The universe was still once more: the moonship had swung into position for its stern-first landing.

Five hundred miles away, pitted lunar craters yawned menacingly at the falling ship. They expanded, displaying hidden contours, desolate rocky fangs, and all the night-

Edmund Cooper, prominent English writer, returns to these pages with this action novelet of what happens to the first men on the Moon. What do they discover? What dangers—alien or otherwise—do they face? Will the Moon only be a stopping place in Man's Conquest of the Galaxy—or will events prove you wrong, and strange things be discovered?

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marish immobility of a petrified world.

Six anxious pairs of eyes gazed at the external visulators on the navigation deck. They saw the crater Tycho, surrounded by cracked and wrinkled lava-plains rushing up as if eager to snatch the moonship clean out of existence.

In less than ten minutes, six men would have fulfilled a centuries-old dream of conquest, having reached the moon alive—or else there would be another smaller crater fifty miles from Tycho, a tiny cup of steam and heat and vaporized metal in the vastness of the lunar silence.

Captain Harper gazed hypnotically at the screen in front of his contour-berth and wondered if it would do any good to pray. Professor Jantz, mathematician and astronomer, attempted to stave off an elemental fear by working out the cube of 789. Doctors Jackson and Holt, geologist and chemist, exchanged whispered instructions in the impossible possibility that either would survive the other. Pegram, the navigator, stroked a rabbit's paw; and Davis, the engineer, silently recited *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*, while clutching a battered photograph of the girl he might have married.

"Sixty seconds to firing point," boomed the auto-announcer. "Forty-five seconds.... Thirty seconds.... Fifteen seconds... Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one—zero!"

A sudden surge of power slammed the men deep into the mattresses of their contour-berths. The port and starboard visulators showed a jet of yellow-green fire reaching down towards the moon from the stern of the ship.

After days of zero gravity, the sudden G force developed a merciless pressure until it seemed as if human veins were filled with mercury, as if bone and tissue had been abruptly transmuted to lead.

On the visulator screen, a long row of mountain fangs swept by, seeming to miss the ship's now extended spider-legs by inches. A smooth area of lava-bed flashed into view, growing with terrifying speed until every detail, every fragment of rock, was sharply outlined.

Now the rocket motors were delivering maximum energy. There was no true sound aboard the moonship, but it seemed as if that tremendous liberation of chemical power had created a silent banshee moan that racked every girder, every metal plate, every human fibre with its high penetrating message.

Professor Jantz was no longer working out the cube of 789: he was unconscious.

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His companions, with varying degrees of discomfort, stared through mists of semi-consciousness at the bright pattern of images flashing on the bulkhead visulators.

The entire cosmos seemed to be pictured on the starboard, port and stern screens. The seconds ticked by, recorded by the thin red needle of the electrochron, hammering out their message like distant gunfire.

"Sixty seconds to zero altitude," boomed the auto-announcer.

Instinctively the men strained to look at each other, to exchange smiles of farewell or anticipatory grins of triumph.

"Forty-five seconds..... Thirty seconds..... Fifteen seconds..... Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one—zero!"

There was silence—the loudest silence ever known. And stillness. Then relief.

As the three spider-legs contacted the lunar surface, the moonship's automatic pilot synchronized the fading of rocket motors with the vessel's fast diminishing momentum. The spindly legs bit cautiously through an inch or two of liquid rock to the hard layer below. There was no bump, no sudden lurch, no sickening wobble. Only the end of something. The end of movement, of accelerating G forces, of flashing images on the visulator screens, of fear and discomfort..... The end of a brief but colossal climax of stress.

Captain Harper was the first to find his voice. "Zero altitude," he said quietly. "Only the good die young!"

Professor Jantz opened his eyes; Pegram, the navigator, surreptitiously put away his rabbit's paw; and Davis stopped reciting *The Golden Journey* to himself. They began top undo their contour-berth straps; and presently, feeling the steady lazy tug of one sixth gravity, everyone crowded up into the observation dome.

Twenty-four hours later, the moonship stood like a three-legged skeleton with only the personnel sphere set perkily on top of its tubuler backbone. At the base of this hundred-feet high derelict that had completed its first and last journey through space, there lay a lunar tractor and trailer, a neat stack of curved metal plates, and a large number of crates of varying shapes and sizes.

The early sunlight cast long shadows in fantastic patterns behind all the goods and chattels of the advance expedition. Large and low in a jet black sky, the green ball of earth dominated its background of stars.

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Meanwhile, on the navigation deck in the personnel sphere, Captain Harper was holding a final conference prior to abandoning ship.

"In four weeks, gentlemen," he was saying, "Number Two ship will arrive. Its cargo, as you know, will be mainly food and two more lunar tractors. If we can have the base well established by then, and if we manage to complete the preliminary survey, a great deal of time will be saved; and the equatorial expedition will be able to get straight off the mark..... As there are only six of us, it's pretty obvious that we've got our work cut out. First thing, of course, is to get a living-unit fixed up. Until that's done, there'll be no time for anything else.... Dr. Jackson, you're the geologist, have you come across any likely niches where we can erect the unit safely?"

"I've found a perfect site," answered Jackson. "It's about a mile away, practically in a direct line with Tycho and the ship. There's a thirty foot fissure with an overhanging shelf. It'll give perfect protection against meteorites. But we shall have to fix up a permanent staircase because the walls are damn near vertical all round."

"How many living-units will it contain?" asked Harper.

"At least three. I see no reason why it shouldn't house three units and the laboratory. And if, eventually, they decide to increase the expedition, there are several nearby crevices where one or two extra units could be placed."

"Dr. Holt, you explored the place with Jackson. What's your verdict?" The Captain looked enquiringly at the chemist, who, being only thirty, was the youngest member of the party.

"There are plenty of ratholes around," said Holt, "but none of 'em quite so convenient. I agree with Jackson. We could do a lot worse."

"We'd better load up, then," said Captain Harper, reaching for the headpiece of his pressure suit. "The sooner we get the first unit erected, the better." He gazed through a plastiglass port-hole. "Something tells me we're going to get thoroughly fed up with this dead landscape before we're through... Any questions?"

"It's time to make a radio check with Earth," said Pegram. "Do you want to send a message, sir?"

Captain Harper lifted the headpiece and smoothed back his thick grey hair. "Tell them," he said humourlessly, "that this place is so dead, if we saw a blade of grass we'd probably scream."

It took three more terres-

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trial days to set up the living-unit in the fissure that Dr. Jackson had selected—by which time, the sun had risen clear of the distant mountain ranges and hung like a blinding fireball in the black, star-pricked sky.

The lunar day, in length a terrestrial fortnight, had now reached the high flush of mid-morning.

While they were erecting the first living-unit, Captain Harper and his companions ate and slept in the pressurized tractor, which was large enough to accomodate the six of them comfortably. Later, when it was used for long distance reconnaissance work, they would have to live in it for over a week at a time. This first experience of life in its compact quarters was valuable training.

Now and again, between the endless tasks of hauling and erecting, one or other of the men would take a few minutes off just to stand and gaze and marvel at the hard, lifeless landscape under its roof of darkness.

They would become thunderstruck at their own smallness, at their colossal achievement, and at the notion that they themselves were probably the first organic life-form ever to be established on the moon.

Fifty miles away, towards the lunar south pole, the crater Tycho displayed its sharp mountain ring with perfect clarity—teeth-like over the faintly curved horizon. There were no atmospheric mists to soften its contours or take the edge of fire from its sunlit peaks.

Stretching away into the distance, on every side of the fissure where Base One had been erected, the lava-plains were covered with a two-inch layer of meteoric dust that fell as rapidly as it was disturbed, and retained footprints like new snow. When the lunar tractor swayed by in eerie silence, the dust was ploughed back to leave a caterpillar indented road. There was not much danger of wandering away from base and getting lost on the moon when footprints left a trail that, unless it was disturbed, would remain clear for thousands of years.

By the fourth terrestrial day, the expedition was established in its subterranean living-unit. Most of the routine fetch-and-carry work was over. Now the real business of experiment and exploration could begin.

It was decided that Doctors Jackson and Holt, with Davis the engineer, should take the tractor and make a survey of ten miles radius, keeping radio contact. They were to return in six hours.

Captain Harper would have

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joined them, but conscience kept him tied down to a pile of routine work at base. And Professor Jantz, having sampled the lunar dust, was completely absorbed in calculations relating to meteoric bombardment. Pegram, the remaining member of the expedition, had his own work to do. Apart from maintaining radio contact with Earth, he would also keep in touch with the tractor.

After a restless three-hour duty sleep, Jackson, Holt and Davis went into the dining room at Base One and ate a hearty breakfast.

Professor Jantz, with a finger-calculator on one side of his plate, and a reference book on the other, peered at them through blue-tinted glasses.

"I want small crystals," he said abruptly, "and anything metallic. Look out for me, Jackson, there's a good fellow."

Jackson swallowed a mouthful of coffee and laughed. "What do you think *I* want, Professor? If there's anything worth having, we'll bring it back."

The professor nodded, then demanded with seeming irrelevance: "Why is there no oxygen on the moon?"

Dr. Holt put down his fork and gazed at the mathematician curiously. "You are aware of the conventional reasons, Professor?"

"Naturally—but they are not good enough."

"What makes you think that?"

Professor Jantz treated the younger man to a secretive smile. "My calculations," he said happily. "We are all going to be surprised."

"Bet you a double ration of brandy," said Dr. Jackson, "that there is definitely no trace of oxygen in any form."

Professor Jantz was silent for a moment. Then he said: "I am not only prepared to take your bet, Dr. Jackson, I am prepared to make an additional wager. I prophesy that we shall discover signs of organic life."

"A week's tobacco says we won't."

"Good. I am a heavy smoker." The professor's confidence was such that he gave the impression of already having actual confirmation.

"Since you are so dogmatic," said Dr. Holt thoughtfully, "you might help us to prove your point by suggesting the type we must look for."

"It will have been sleeping for millions of years," said the professor. "We shall find it in caves or chasms, but not I think near the main craters."

"Stop being enigmatic," said Jackson. "What the devil are you getting at?"

"Coal," said the professor

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impressively. "Beautiful carboniferous coal."

"Nuts!" retorted Jackson.

"Nuts and dust," said Jantz calmly, returning to his calculations.

They had been away from base about twenty minutes. Davis was driving, and the tractor was making a steady twelve miles an hour. Dr. Jackson sat by his side in the pressurized compartment with a sketch pad strapped to his knee. Every now and then he made a few key notes or a diagram, and when he was not doing that he talked to Pegram, at base, over the radio.

Dr. Holt was outside the tractor, squatting in the 'crow's-nest' with a cine-camera. His only means of contact with the two occupants was his personal radio. The sun beat mercilessly down on his pressure suit and headpiece; but as yet the insulation was doing a good job, and he felt reasonably comfortable.

"Hello, Base One. Hello, Base One," said Jackson. "We are four miles south of you, heading roughly towards Tycho. The going is comparatively smooth, and the tractor handles well. Tell Professor Jantz that the dust layer gets deeper in some of the ruts and bubble holes. Very slight evidence of a tendency to drift. Over to you."

"Hello, tractor. Hello, tractor. Professor Jantz has fixed up the seismograph. He requests an explosion when you are about ten miles away. Please inform us before detonation. Over to you."

"Hello, Base One. We consider it a privilege to create the first synthetic moonquake. Will let you know when we are ready. Over and out."

Jackson flicked off the switch, and spoke to Davis: "Jantz is light-headed. He bet a week's tobacco that we'll discover coal."

"Personally," said Davis, "I couldn't care less. The only thing that would surprise me is if something moved."

Suddenly Holt's voice came urgently over the personal radio. "Stop the tractor, and come out quick!"

Davis depressed the clutch and slipped into neutral. The motor gave a whine of relief.

"What is it?" called Jackson.

"Come out here and tell me," came the enigmatic reply. Holt had already clambered out of the crow's-nest and was walking away from the tractor, peering carefully at the ground.

Davis and Jackson reached for their headpieces, screwed them down, tested oxygen and radio, then went into the airlock. A few moments later, they joined Holt.

"What do you make of

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this?" asked Holt with suppressed excitement. He pointed down to the dust layer.

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Jackson. "Man Friday himself!"

He was staring at a set of clear footprints in the telltale lunar dust. Impulsively, he planted his own foot down by one of the strange prints and compared the size. His own was narrower and four inches shorter.

"Now," said Holt, "follow the line."

Jackson let his gaze run along the trail until it disappeared in the distance. There were two sets of prints: one coming and one going. They ran in dead straight parallel lines towards the crater Tycho.

"What do we do?" asked Davis. "Radio to base?"

"Don't be in such a hurry," said Jackson irritably. "The good Lord placed an ornamental bulge on the end of your neck. Try and use it."

"I'm going to give it thirty seconds of film," announced Holt, unslinging his cine-camera. "Looks like Professor Jantz was being a little conservative when he hit on coal as the only evidence of organic life."

"S o m e t h i n g has walked from the direction of Tycho," said Jackson half to himself. "It came and apparently stood here a bit, then turned round and walked back. Now why should it do that? It must have had a purpose."

"Exercise," suggested Holt flippantly. "The L u n a r i a n idea of a constitutional."

"I'm not in the mood for s c h o o l b o y humour," said Jackson. "Think up something useful to say, or use less oxygen."

Davis suddenly pointed behind them. "Do you see what I see?" he asked.

They turned round and followed his gaze. Four miles away, the stripped hulk of the moonship, with its personnel sphere catching the sunlight, was clearly visible—like a low-hung star.

"Holy smoke!" said Holt. "A shy welcome committee! He, she or it must have watched us touch down."

"What shall we do?" asked Davis. "Follow the tracks?"

"I don't think so," said Jackson slowly. "This is something the bright boys didn't bargain for. I think we'd better hot-foot back to base and have a pow-wow."

"It wouldn't do any harm to follow the tracks for a little of the way," suggested Holt.

"What for?"

"You never know, we might pick up some more evidence that will give us a better idea of the character who made them."

"Also," said Jackson drily, "we might bump into the

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aforementioned character. And he might invite us home for coffee and cake. On the other hand, he might not approve of—intruders."

Captain Harper gazed at the faces of his five companions. "Well, we have heard Dr. Jackson's story and seen the film of the tracks. We now have to consider what we are going to do about the situation. As you know, nothing like this was envisaged when we left Earth..... Any suggestions?"

Professor Jantz stroked his jaw thoughtfully. "The track marks indicate a biped of considerable stature. There is no appreciable atmosphere on the moon, therefore the creature can do without it, or else he provides his own. It would be safe, I think, to assume that he provides his own. This seems to presuppose a somewhat complex or decidedly intelligent being. The point is, would we be correct in assuming that there are many of his kind?"

"The point is, are we going to investigate?" said Dr. Holt. "Or are we going to try to avoid it or them until the next moonship arrives?"

"It or they may decide to investigate us," observed Captain Harper drily. "The main problem is, will they be dangerous and will they be hostile? .. I pleaded with the Organization Group to let me have some offensive weapons on this trip. But they carefully pointed out that no organic life could exist here. They gave me a string of figures showing how many tons of fuel it would take to lift a u/s vibrator unit. And now the whole project may be in danger because some blasted animal doesn't subscribe to their cock-eyed little theories."

"Don't worry about weapons, Captain," said Holt. "The lab is operating now. In twelve hours, I can dream up some rocket grenades that'll take care of considerable opposition."

"Also," said Dr. Jackson, "we have enough high explosive to lay a mine-field—to be detonated either by contact or radio."

Captain Harper drummed the edge of the table with his fingers for a few moments before replying. "In any case," he said finally, "we must have something with which to protect ourselves. My own opinion is that we must postpone action for a few hours until we have a supply of hand and rocket grenades and, perhaps, radio mines."

"Then what?" asked Dr. Holt.

"Then, I think we must send a party to follow the tracks. It is imperative that we discover whether—wheth-

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er there is any danger. Apart from our own safety, there is the rest of the expedition to consider."

"When the products of two culture patterns meet," remarked Jantz thoughtfully, "there is an inevitable conflict. I wonder which will triumph?"

There was a brief silence.

"The moon is barren," said Holt irrelevantly. "Now what could Friend X possibly have for breakfast?"

Captain Harper decided to go on the reconnaissance himself, taking Jackson and Davis with him. Holt would remain behind, making more grenades and a few radio-controlled land mines. Professor Jantz and Pegram would alternately patrol on the surface and handle radio-communications.

A double track in the lunar dust had entirely disrupted the plans of the advance expedition. Psychologically, they had already begun to feel as if they were in a state of siege. It would not have been so bad if the tracks had been those of a four-footed creature. But a biped suggested power and high evolutionary development. If it was indigenous to the moon, there was no reason why it should not be present in great numbers. And if that was the case, it would probably resent the intruders from space—just as Earthlings would if the situation was reversed.

Harper and his companions took their load of food, water and grenades through the airlock of their underground base. They climbed up the metal staircase and went out into the blinding sunlight.

The supplies were dumped in the tractor, and everything was checked prior to departure. Davis again took the driver's seat; and while he started the motor, Dr. Jackson established radio contact with the tiny metal world that was secreted in its deep fissure. Meanwhile, Captain Harper, with four hand grenades, took himself up to the crow's-nest, directly over the driver's seat.

"Tractor to Base," said Jackson. "We are on our way. Will make routine checks every quarter of an hour. Over."

"Base to tractor," replied Pegram. "Receiving you loud and clear. Good hunting. Over and out."

The whine of the motor increased, and the tractor began to lurch slowly over the dead lunar plains, following its own previous path.

After half an hour, the place where Holt had first seen the alien footprints was reached without incident. This time, progress had been more cautious. At one point, Captain Harper, keeping a constant watch on the crater

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Tycho which lay on the port side, thought he saw movement in the distance. But he eventually put it down to imagination and the fatigue engendered by staring across the bright, arid lava-plains. There was nothing—nothing but a silent wilderness. He began to think that the whole thing was some kind of illusion. Until he suddenly caught sight of the tracks. They were so alarmingly distinct that they might have been created only five minutes before.

By common consent, the three men left the tractor and took a close look at the almost mathematically spaced indentations.

"Man Friday has a very precise stride, hasn't he?" said Jackson. "I wonder how far we could walk in a dead straight line, keeping our footsteps evenly spaced."

"He's a big devil," said Harper. "There's damn near a yard and a half between each print..... Well, let's get on his tail. The sooner we clear up this mystery, and find out just what we're up against, the better I'll like it."

"It may not be very funny if he's collected a few playmates to sit up and wait for us," said Jackson quietly.

"We've got to take the risk. We can't just sit down at base and wait till he leaves a visiting card..... Can you get the tractor to do twenty-five, Davis?"

"Yes, sir. Providing we don't have to keep it up for more than fifty miles or so."

Captain Harper pointed to Tycho. "We won't. By the time we get there—if we get there—we'll all need a break."

"Why don't you have a spell inside, Captain? I'll take a watch in the crow's-nest."

Harper grunted his approval of Jackson's suggestion, and the three men walked back to the vehicle. Presently, it was lurching along the trail at twenty-five miles an hour.

They stopped the tractor about eight hundred yards away, and Jackson came down from the crow's-nest for a hasty consultation. Directly ahead lay the one symmetrical feature in the whole irregular landscape. It was a smooth hemisphere, surfaced apparently with metal, lying flush against the lava-beds about five miles from the foot-hills of Tycho. It rose abruptly from the drab landscape like a giant ostrich egg half buried in sand. It seemed about forty feet high.

"Looks like we've found Man Friday's lair," said Jackson. "He must be a clever boy to fix himself up with a nice metal hide-away..... Wonder if it's pressurized?"

Captain Harper stared sombrely through the thick glass of the tractor's observation dome. "The more I see, the less I like it," he announced

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slowly. "We now have concrete evidence that our friend is pretty civilized, if not scientific. I wonder what other pleasant surprises there are in store?"

Jackson remained silent.

"What's the plan of campaign, sir?" asked Davis. "Do we push on and investigate?"

"We've got to do something about it," said Harper. "We can't just pack up now and turn back..... I suggest we approach slowly until we're a couple of hundred yards away. Then....." He hesitated.

"Then what?" asked Jackson.

"Then one of us will go forward alone to investigate—taking grenades, of course. The others will remain in the tractor to await developments."

"I'll go," said Davis suddenly.

"No," said Jackson. "This is my job. If Man Friday and his friends prove hostile, engineers become more important than geologists..... I'm damn sure *I* couldn't fix the tractor if we had a breakdown—and the tractor might make all the difference. Don't you agree, Captain Harper?"

"Unfortunately, yes..... But let's hope there won't be any melodrama. Now we'd better start. And I think we all ought to wear headpieces as from now—in case they throw anything."

The tractor crawled slowly forward until it was two hundred yards from the metal hemisphere. Then it stopped. Without wasting any time, Dr. Jackson climbed down from the crow's-nest and walked ahead, with a grenade ready in each hand.

The smooth wall of the hemisphere was broken only by an open doorway. As he advanced, Dr. Jackson could see a red glow inside. When he was ten yards away he stopped, peered through the plastiglass visor of his headpiece uncertainly, then covered the remaining distance in one quick bound. The two men in the tractor watched him disappear into the darkness.

Immediately, Captain Harper spoke over the personal radio: "What's the set-up? Are you all right?"

With a sigh of relief, he heard Jackson's voice loud and steady. "No one at home. Come and have a look..... I'm beginning to believe in fairies!"

"What have you found?"

"It's either a technician's nightmare or some kind of laboratory..... Hellfire! I'll believe anything now!"

"What's happened?" asked Harper urgently.

"I've just discovered what look like three king-size coffins!"

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Three hours later, the tractor had returned to base, and Captain Harper was giving an account of the trip to Professor Jantz, Pegram and Dr. Holt; while Davis and Dr. Jackson kept watch on the surface. In view of the knowledge recently acquired, it was felt now that two men should always be on surface patrol.

"The place wasn't at all pressurized," said Harper, "which is fairly significant. Its walls were about three inches thick with—I should guess—a cavity or insulation layer. The dull red glow came from some sort of activated crystal suspended over a circular bench, about five feet high, that ran all round. There were various mechanical gadgets strewn all over the bench, and some fairly large apparatus about which we just didn't have a clue. Jackson thought there was some geological equipment, and Davis swears that a sizable box of tricks underneath the bench was a radio transmitter. But not having seen junk like that before, we could only guess vaguely at its functions."

"About these boxes you dramatically describe as coffins," said Professor Jantz. "Can you give more details?"

"They were ten feet long and lay horizontally. The hinged lids were open, and we took a good look inside. They were made of black metal and lined with a sort of glassy fabric. When Dr. Jackson moved to touch it, a spark shot across to his pressure suit and was earthed automatically. He didn't try again..... They appear to have been occupied."

"This is damn funny," said Dr. Holt with a nervous laugh. "We thought the moon was uninhabited, and now we've collected a trio of scientific zombies for next-door neighbors."

"I'm not laughing," said Harper bitterly. "At the moment, my sense of humour is conspicuous by its absence. What happens if these creatures don't want to be friendly—if and when we meet 'em? They aren't going to use bows and arrows."

"The possible occupation of the—er—coffins presents an interesting train of thought," said Jantz enigmatically. "I begin to form a mental picture of an intelligent, muscular biped, about nine feet tall, who supplies his own atmosphere, conducts scientific experiments, ignores animal comfort and is capable of walking nearly a hundred miles in high temperatures."

"A pretty unpleasant sort of enemy," commented Harper.

"If he turns out to be an enemy," added Dr. Holt.

"Were there many tracks

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round the place?" asked the professor.

"Dozens."

"Did you follow any of them up?"

"We thought we'd better get back with the information so far acquired before we ran into trouble..... Are you implying that we ought to establish contact?"

"As soon as possible," said Jantz. "At the moment, we are afraid of them—yet we haven't seen them—and they, I presume, will be afraid of us..... An unsatisfactory situation... We must do something to allay or confirm our fears, so that we can plan a definite course of action."

"I've cooked up enough radio mines to lay a fairly close field round the base," said Holt. "We can make sure that this place is reasonably safe, anyway."

Suddenly, the table shuddered, and an empty coffee cup fell over. From years of experience, the men instinctively listened for the sounds of the accompanying explosion. There was nothing.

"What the devil's that?" snapped Harper.

Pegram dashed to the transmitter. "Hello, surface patrol! What's happening? Over."

There was no answer. As he tried again, Captain Harper and Dr. Holt put their headpieces on and hurried to the airlock.

"Hello, surface patrol. Hello, surface patrol. What is happening? Over."

After a few moments, Jackson's voice came faintly: "For God's sake come quickly! The moonship is...is destroyed... I've got a leak in my pressure suit....."

In three minutes, Captain Harper and Dr. Holt had reached the surface. For a moment, they stood paralysed, gazing at the tangled ruin of the moonship a mile away. Then they dashed to the lunar tractor, jumped aboard and headed for the wreckage at full speed.

They had gone three quarters of the way when they came across Jackson. He was lying quite still on the hard rock. Dr. Holt jumped out of the tractor, lifted him bodily and brought him back into the pressurized compartment.

"Is he alive?" demanded Harper tersely, as he started the motor.

"I think so. It's a very slow leak, and he had the sense to turn the oxygen to full pressure." He began to unscrew Jackson's headpiece.

The geologist's lips quivered. He gave a tremendous shudder and opened his eyes. "Get Davis," he mumbled weakly. "He was only about fifty yards from the moonship."

"What did it?" asked Harper, keeping his eyes on the lava-plains ahead, as he

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steered directly for the wrecked ship.

In normal atmospheric pressure, Dr. Jackson was recovering quickly. The color returned to his face, and he managed to sit up. "I didn't see a thing," he said with an effort. "The ship just crumpled. Then the shock wave dropped me on a sharp rock, and I knew a leak had started. It was all I could do to switch oxygen and helium to full, and pray you'd pick me up before the pressure dropped too much."

"Look, there he is!" exclaimed Holt. He pointed to a prone figure sixty yards away. As the tractor slid towards it, the three occupants could see that Davis had no headpiece. But it was not till the tractor had stopped that they discovered that he also had no head.

"Poor devil," said Harper. "Too near the blast."

"He wouldn't even have time to feel it," said Dr. Holt in a subdued voice.

"God Almighty! Look at the mess!" exclaimed Harper. He pointed to the wreck.

The moonship had been destroyed most efficiently. The long spider legs and tubular backbone were twisted like tin-foil. The personnel sphere was non-existent, but beads of molten metal, scattered like raindrops, gave ample testament of its utter destruction. No ordinary high explosives would have produced such tremendous heat. It could only have been achieved—by Earthlings, anyway—with the use of atomic power.

Dr. Jackson was the first to break the silence. "I wonder," he said quietly, "if Man Friday is still hanging about?"

"There's not much cover here for a character nine feet high," said Holt. "Nor for his transport, if he has any."

Captain Harper started the motor again. "Better see if we can find any tracks," he said.

The tractor began to crawl slowly round the wreck in expanding circles.

The Council of War, held in the pressurized living-unit below the lunar surface, was brief and to the point. The five men sat around the table, smoking and drinking coffee in quantities well above the legitimate ration.

"Well, we've had the reply from Earth," announced Harper grimly. "They're very sorry for us, but they aren't going to send any more moonships until they know what we're up against.

"I'll bet they're already planning a nice epitaph," said Holt cynically.

"It was the logical answer," remarked Jackson. "What's the point of endangering the whole expedition?"

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"The ethical problem can be left till later," observed Professor Jantz with a faint smile. "The most important thing at the moment is to decide what we are going to do."

"Return the compliment," suggested Holt. "We ought to go along to their hide-away and blast it to pieces. It may serve to warn them off for a while, and it may also stop them from presenting us with another atomic shell."

"If it was atomic," said Professor Jantz.

"It certainly wasn't H.E.," returned Jackson. "The personnel sphere was half vapourized."

"I think we are, at the moment, a little too belligerent," said the Professor mildly. "After all, if our absent friends have been on the moon some time, they have a right to resent intruders. Providing we remain hidden and inactive, there is no reason why they should not assume that they have already destroyed us."

"We followed their tracks," retorted Harper. "Obviously, they'll follow ours. For all we know, they might be preparing to drop another atomic shell right here... In view of the fact that they have won the first round, I think it's up to us to make sure they don't win the next... Besides, one of our party is already dead, and Dr. Jackson only survived by about ninety seconds. The longer we stay inactive, the more chance these creatures have of picking us off."

"I think Captain Harper is right," said Jackson. "We've got to do everything we can either to destroy them or discourage them."

"We'll put it to a vote," said the Captain. "Make a noise if you're in favour of having an all-out effort to make them lose interest."

There was an immediate response. Only Professor Jantz remained silent.

A couple of hours later, preparations were complete. A radio-controlled mine-field had been placed round the entrance to the base-unit; practice throws had been made with dummy grenades; and the men had been gratified to discover that the moon's weak gravity enabled them to hurl a grenade with reasonable accuracy over two hundred yards. The improvised rocket bombard could deliver fifty pounds of high explosive at targets more than a mile away.

Captain Harper's strategy was extremely simple—it had to be, for their resources were severely limited. The rocket bombrad would be mounted in the crow's-nest of the tractor; then three men would take the tractor on its destructive

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mission while the other two stayed at base.

If the tractor failed to return from its fifty-mile journey to the metal hemisphere near the foot-hills of Tycho, it would be the duty of the survivors to radio as much information as possible to Earth, while remaining hidden.

Pegram and Professor Jantz would stay at base, while the others did what they could.

Each of the five men realized with bitter clarity that the fate of man's first expedition to the moon hung precariously in the balance. If they failed now, another attempt might not be made for several decades.

Presently, all the weapons and supplies were aboard the lunar tractor, and everything was ready for departure. The three men piled aboard while Pegam and Jantz stood by, offering occasional suggestions and checking that nothing had been left behind.

"As from now," said Captain Harper over his personal radio, "we won't break radio silence unless it's a matter of life and death. Our friends may have some sort of direction-finding apparatus, and there's no point in making it easy for them."

"As a scientist, I disapprove of your purpose," said Professor Jantz with irony. "But as a man—well, good luck, you people. I hope you succeed."

"It'll be just too bad if we don't," said Harper grimly.

Holt gave a dry laugh. "Tell them," he said, "that my last thoughts were of mother."

"We're fighting for the human race," remarked Dr. Jackson. "Oh how we hate its ruddy face."

Amid laughter that gave a brittle impression of being light-hearted, Captain Harper started the tractor, coaxed it into gear, and let out the clutch. Leaving behind it a quick-falling wake of lunar dust, the tractor rocked silently across the blinding lava-plains.

It was the expedition's fifth terrestrial day on the moon, but already it seemed as if they had never known any other existence. The earth itself had become an illusion, a receding dream. The only realities now were the hard dusty lava-plains, the distant craters, and the ominous power of unseen creatures—the threat of those elusive and apparently tireless beings whom Jantz sarcastically referred to as 'our absent friends'....

Pegram and the professor watched the tractor shrink until it was no more than a tiny beetle toiling over a rippling sea of rock.

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From a black star-studded sky, the sun flung down its harsh unfiltered radiation, creating the unbelievable surface heat of a late lunar morning.

In the distance, the mountains of Tycho rose grim and forbidding, bathed by the burning sunlight. The whole landscape, locked in its own peculiar stillness, looked like a painted desert—the backcloth of a drama of suspense and danger, as indeed it was.

Captain Harper stopped the tractor a mile away from the metal hemisphere, and after hasty confirmation of the general plan of attack, Holt and Jackson got out. Holt took up position two hundred yards away on the left flank, and Jackson two hundred yards away on the right, thus preventing a direct hit knocking out the entire attacking force.

Armed with grenades, the two men would advance steadily until they were in throwing range, or encountered opposition. If they were able to demolish the building without tackling the enemy, they would do so and withdraw: if not, they would do their best to engage the defence while Captain Harper drove the tractor in as close as possible and used the rocket bombard.

As soon as they had reached their flanking positions, Harper waved his arm in the observation turret, and the two men moved forward at an ungainly, bounding trot.

They were within four hundred yards of the hemisphere before there was any sign of activity. Then suddenly, a large shape, oddly human, appeared momentarily in the doorway of the strange building. It hesitated, disappeared again, reappeared almost instantaneously and began running towards Holt at a tremendous speed.

As it came clear into the sunlight, the three men saw that it was completely encased by metal. Its arms, legs and thick jointed body flashed dully as the strange being rapidly advanced.

Although it was nine feet high, and uncannily human in shape, the human beings who now confronted it saw outline between its shoulders was smooth and flat. The creature had no head.

Holt's arm jerked sharply, and a grenade flashed towards his macabre adversary, who was now only hundred and fifty yards away. The monster continued on his course without any attempt at evasion.

The explosion made no sound, but a dull shock-wave

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carried even to the tractor, now four hundred yards to the rear.

The grenade had been aimed well, in spite of the monster's speed. It dropped about ten yards behind him. The blast would have torn a human being to bits, but that metal-covered body merely sailed through the void another half dozen yards, picked itself up and continued its rapid advance. Holt lifted his arm to hurl another grenade, but he was too late. Something glittered in the monster's hand. For a split second, a thin pencil beam of intense radiance flashed on.

With involuntary cries of horror, Jackson and Captain Harper saw Holt fall in a heap. Even at that distance, it was easy to see that his body had been cut clean in two.

Instantly, the creature, seeing one enemy destroyed, turned towards Jackson. For a moment, it was still—a perfect target—and Jackson did not waste the opportunity. Two grenades in rapid succession flew towards their target even as the strange being ran to attack. Realizing intuitively that the creature would run straight at him, Jackson surposely let one of the grenades fall short.

Leaving the first grenade well behind, the monster ran full into the second explosion. For a moment it seemed to hang suspended—a tableau of complete surprise—then arms and legs and body hurtled up into the void, and felt separately.

Wasting no time inspecting the damage, Dr. Jackson turned immediately towards the metal hemisphere. Two more headless monsters had appeared. They seemed to be setting up some sort of apparatus.

Meanwhile, Captain Harper slammed the tractor into top speed and drove crazily towards the target. Less than three hundred yards away, he stopped suddenly; and having de-pressurized the tractor, went straight through the airlock, knocking his headpiece heavily against the hiduminium door.

One well-timed leap brought him up into the crow's-nest beside the rocket bombard. Hastily aligning the rough sights, he passed the detonator button.

His aim was too high. Fifty pounds of high explosive sailed harmlessly over the objective. But even as he feverishly reloaded, he saw Jackson moving forward out of the corner of his eye.

The geologist ran quickly to within throwing range, hurled two more grenades and fell flat on his face. The first one didn't explode; but it would have made no difference, since it was about thir-

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ty yards short. The second, however, fell only eight or nine yards away from the two beings. Even as one of them raised the strange glittering weapon in his hand, the grenade exploded, blowing him and his companion over backwards and flattening their apparatus.

Far from being mortally wounded, the two creatures picked themselves up with astonishing speed. One of them ran for his hand-weapon, lying on the lava-bed a few yards away; while the other quickly tried to reconstruct his small tripod and its ominous-looking cylinder.

But by this time, Harper had not only reloaded, he had forced himself by supreme act of will to take slow and measured aim—realizing, perhaps, that the issue depended entirely on his next shot.

The heavy rocket grenade sped straight towards the hemisphere. For a terrible moment, it seemed as if the charge would not detonate. Then there was a silent flash, and the lunar tractor shuddered violently. The sudden cloud of dust fell almost as rapidly as it had risen.

When it cleared, Captain Harper saw that the metal hemisphere and its strange occupants were utterly destroyed. All that remained was a jagged, smoking debris of twisted metal.

For a moment, the two survivors remained perfectly still. Then Dr. Jackson picked himself up and began to walk unsteadily towards what had once been Dr. Holt. With slow, jerky movements Captain Harper climbed down from the rocket bombard and made as if to join him. Suddenly, he collapsed. Dr. Jackson turned and ran to him.

"I.....think it's a..... slow leak," gasped Harper over his personal radio. "Pressurize ..... pressurize tractor.....for God's sake!"

Jackson picked him up and staggered to the tractor. He pushed Harper through the airlock, climbed in himself, slammed the sealing door and turned on the air cylinders to full.

The leak must have been infinitesimal, for the Captain recovered almost immediately.

"Thanks," he said shakily. "It's an awful feeling, isn't it?"

"They haven't yet invented the words to describe it," remarked Jackson grimly. "You'll have to stay in the tractor till we get back."

"Blast! We ought to do something about Holt, but my brain isn't working clearly. Any suggestions?"

"None worth having..... You saw what happened?"

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Harper nodded. "Our headless friend gave him something that makes h/v bullets seem like baby toys. . . . We ought to take a look at him, though."

"Would that be wise?" asked Jackson slowly.

"You mean because of radio-activity?"

"Among other things."

"What about the remains of their outpost, then? I'll drive the tractor in close. I shouldn't think the H.E. will have left anything in a sufficiently dangerous concentration. What do you think?"

"It's worth the risk. We might learn something useful about them."

Harper started the tractor and let it move slowly forward toward the area of devastation. He switched off the motor about twenty yards from the wreckage.

"You know something?" said Jackson, as he prepared to go through the airlock. "In a way, we're lucky. This is the second little bit of history we've been privileged to make."

"How do you mean?"

"That character who dropped Holt then charged at me," said Jackson, "was quite peculiar. I was nearer to him than you were. I saw him fall apart."

"What are you getting at?"

"Only that he wasn't made of frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails," replied Jackson with irony. "You know, Captain, I think we must be the first human beings to do battle with a bunch of lethal robots. . . . The fact that we took those three apart is quite significant, really."

"Good God!" exclaimed Harper.

Dr. Jackson turned and went through the airlock. Presently he was poking about among the glaring sun-lit wreckage.

The crisis was over but at Base One it took some time for the atmosphere of high tension to die down. Two men of the first expedition had died, and the whole moon project had been on the edge of failure. Only a slow and intensive search of the entire base area and the foothills of Tycho convinced the four survivors that, at least, there was no more immediate danger. Eventually, they felt justified in returning to normal routine.

It was several terrestrial days later that Professor Jantz took the opportunity afforded by Dr. Jackson's absence on a survey expedition to do some work of his own in the small underground laboratory. He was absorbed in the spectroscopic analysis of quantities of fine black dust.

When Captain Harper found him, the Professor was

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engaged in electronically heating a minute pile to incandescence.

"Which sample are you working on now?" asked Harper conversationally.

Professor Jantz displayed the pleaasure of a child who has discovered something altogether wonderful in his Christmas stocking. "The third sample from cavern fourteen," he explained happily.

"How's it going?"

"My dear Harper, this is a perfect specimen of bituminous carboniferous coal of the type known as fusain. There is a wonderful abundance of microspores and macrospores. My theories, I may say, are confirmed up to the hilt. When I get back to Earth, I shall read a paper to—"

"What does it mean, in plain language?" interrupted Harper.

"It means quite simply that the moon was once teeming with estuarine swamps. It means that, billions of years ago, the moon was a riot of evolving life-forms. In short, we have accumulated enough evidence to shake modern astro-physical theory right to its foundations."

"Why isn't there any surface evidence of all this?"

"Because, as the moon began to lose its atmosphere, the intensifying sunlight generated spontaneous combustion. Half the so-called meteoric dust is the ashes from what must once have been tremendous smouldering graveyards....."

Harper grinned. "So now you'll be able to blast the armchair astronomers."

"I most certainly shall. I have enough data to make most of my illustrious colleagues feel that the time has come for them to enter mental institutions."

Captain Harper took a couple of folded typewritten sheets from his pocket. "I really hunted you out to show you the message I intend to transmit back to Organization Headquarters. If there's anything you wish to add, you'd better say so. I shall have to send it in the next hour or so."

Professor Jantz took the sheets and read them quickly:

DISPATCH SEVEN

From: Harper, Captain of Advance Expedition, Lunar Base One.

To: Executive Council, Expedition H.Q., Earth.

Since the destruction of the robot-manned outpost, Jackson and Pegram have made an extensive survey of the ground within a radius of one hundred miles of base. They have discovered no more alien

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tracks, other than those originating from the hemisphere, and no further signs of independent activity. We are confident, then, that it is safe for the second moonship to depart on schedule; and feel that the equatorial expedition may be undertaken in face of environmental hazards only.

We have examined the debris of the robot outpost, and have drawn the following conclusions:

1) The robots are not indigenous to the moon, since their constructions would demand resources and a highly developed life-form of which there is no evidence.

2) Their construction is beyond the present developments of human science.

3) Since their outpost was exposed and unpressurized, the three so-called coffins appear to have been the 'hibernation' chambers and electrical charging-beds of the robots during the lunar night. Evidence of their electrical potential was obtained before the outpost was destroyed.

4) Assuming that the three previous hypotheses are substantially correct, we believe that at some time the moon received an extra-terrestrial expedition which left the robots for observational purposes and scientific investigation.

5) Since the robots took the initiative in attacking us, it is probable that their creators conditioned the machines to react aggressively to any phenomena that might be interpreted as interference.

6) Bearing in mind that the robots were apparently equipped with space-radio, it is probable that they originated within our own solar system.

The full arguments in support of these views will be submitted in Dispatch Eight. It remains for me to add our unanimous belief that the extra-terrestrial expedition will ultimately return to discover the fate of its mechanical outpost. It is hoped, by that time, that human beings and equipment will be present on the moon in sufficient force to fulfil our aims irrespective of interference or co-operation.

Professor Jantz looked up from the typewritten sheets. "I think you've given our main conclusions admirably," he said. "The rest can wait until we have time to prepare a full report.... As soon as I've finished with these samples, I'll put my own notes in order for you."

"It's about time Jackson and Pegram were back," remarked Harper, stuffing the sheets back in his pocket. "I'll give them a call on the transceiver."

He went out, leaving the Professor to continue his

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work. For another two hours, Jantz was able to go on with his analysis of the samples from cavern fourteen without being disturbed.

Then Captain Harper returned. "They got back safely," he announced.

"Good, good. Now we can relax for a few hours."

"They want us to go up to the surface," said Harper. "They say there's something worth seeing."

"More samples!" exclaimed the Professor delightedly. "Where the devil did I put my headpiece?"

Presently, the two men made their way through the airlock and clambered up the metal ladder set against the walls of the fissure. They reached the surface to see Jackson and Pegram standing by the lunar tractor.

"Have you found something interesting?" called Jantz hopefully over his personal radio.

"Yes," replied Jackson, raising his arm. "Look around."

Everywhere, the shadows were stretched to unimaginable lengths; and the rolling lava-plains, softened now in oblique sunlight, were beginning to assume the dark contours of a lunar twilight. The scene was desolate, grotesque, and altogether beautiful.

Slowly, infinitely slowly, the sun began to sink over distant fire-tipped mountains. Slowly, the great ball of Earth loomed against a star-strewn backcloth of total darkness.

Captain Harper and his three companions stood silently in a deepening green glow, watching the inexorable course of the sun over a ragged horizon.

It was a scene to be remembered as long as they lived—the subtle change stealing over a petrified landscape; the slow, impressive end of their first lunar day.

THE GALACTIC GAZETEER

HARRA. A pre-Conquest civilization on what some describe as the Moon. Flourished about eighteen thousand kvartals ago. Um-Harra the Forty-Second, the last ruler of the Ummi Dynasty, was a famous poet and mystic. He refused to emigrate to Earth with the other Harri, after the Wars of Attrition, retreating instead to a deserted monastery in the Uttrotta Mountains to compose an ode on the glories of his dynasty.

PEKKEHETTEVARRA. A native dish on Aldebaran, very popular with tourists, said by some to have come about when a group of colonists from the Finn-Ugrian Confederation found themselves among the kopak-eating Aldebaranians.

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scavenger

by...STANLEY MULLEN

On Mars, a scavenger hunt may turn up anything—even a scavenger.

He did not look like a scavenger. Not even like someone down on his luck. His clothes were neat, well-kept, and had been expensive. Actually he appeared drunk or suffering from shock. Footsteps faltering, he moved from trashcan to trashcan, lifting each lid carefully, hesitating, then replacing it before going on to the next. His most distinguishing feature was the heavy wrap-around bandage which covered his head completely. Eyeholes cut in the fabric seemed pits of empty darkness against the crisp, starchy whiteness of bandage.

Marsport, at night. The back alleys, no place for an unarmed stranger.

And no place certainly, thought the scavenger, for the party approaching through the alley.

The crowd fell back, mouths open in horror. The women wrong delicate fingers, the males stared with beady eyes.

A whiff of very expensive scent rolled before them like a wave, striking through layered gauze and wrinkling his sensitive nostrils. No trashcan ever smelled like that, and neither should a Martian street.

There is a theory that scavengers are born. There is also the theory, a little closer to reality, that scavengers are often fleeing from themselves, fleeing from memories, fleeing from Fate... This scavenger on Mars is a unique scavenger in many ways, dangerous and frightening.

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Neither the three young, attractive, gaily chattering females, nor their aura of obvious wealth, belonged on barren Mars. Obviously Earthlings, and the spoiled darlings of rich families, strangers to the city, probably tourists. The trio came swiftly down the alley, appearing untouched by and unaware of the dangers of their surroundings.

They were not alone, of course, and not unescorted.

A fourth member of the group, apparently their armed escort and a hireling of some sort, knew his place and held it.

He hung back, following closely enough to give ample protection, but still far enough away not to seem pushing himself into the party. One of his hands hovered suggestively near a gun butt.

Warily, as if she might not be entirely a fool, one of the three females took a position ahead of her companions. She seemed to be their leader, more decisive and outspoken than the others. She stopped before the scavenger. His dark eye sockets studied her. Laughing as if champagne bubbled inside her, she reached out and caressed the bandage with soft fingers.

"Do you mind?" she asked, not really caring. "You're from Earth, too, aren't you?"

Bandaged head nodded.

"Then perhaps you'd do us a favor. Rather a big favor."

"Go on. Tell him about it," urged the other two.

"We're having a party on the spaceship that brought us to Mars. A farewell party. We're leaving the ship here, doing the grand tour by ourselves. We'd like you to come back to the party with us. It's a nice party."

Silence did not question her statement. His speech, though polite, questioned her judgment.

"Why?"

The trio giggled, the sound unexpectedly feminine in the stillness of Martian night.

"We're having a scavenger hunt. You're going to help us win the game, and we'll share our prize with you."

You know how the game goes. First you choose teams, then slips of paper are put in a hat or bowl. On each slip is written the name or description of some unlikely object, which is supposed to be hard to locate. Then the various teams fare forth into the city to find and bring back the object it has drawn as its objective. The first team to return with the authentic article as named or described wins the game and the prize.

"I know the game," said the bandaged scavenger softly. I've played it myself. On Earth, a long time ago. But why me? What kind of object is your team supposed to find."

"A scavenger," she said quickly. "A special kind but

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.... You are a scavenger, aren't you."

His laugh was short, brutal. "I guess I am. I don't know what I'm looking for, or why? But I have a compulsion to scavenge, so that makes me a scavenger, doesn't it?"

"You will come with us?"

Below the bandages, his shoulder shrugged. "Why not?"

"You've had some kind of bad luck, haven't you?" she asked, speaking rapidly as if to cover sudden embarrassment.

"Very bad," admitted the scavenger wearily. "But don't concern yourself with it. Have fun. You're young, all of you, and very lovely, in spite of the arrogance that goes with youth and riches. Make the most of it."

"Oh, come now," she jeered happily. "You can't be as old as that. Bad luck passes. And money doesn't matter, unless you don't have enough. Besides, you help us, and we'll help you. Before you leave the party, I'll write you a check to help you find yourself a fresh start. I'll bet you had a good job, and I'll bet you were good at it."

"I had a good job," he muttered. "And I guess I was good at it. I made money doing the things I wanted to do. That is as near success and happiness as anyone gets. I was, and I suppose I still am, a spaceman."

"I knew it," she shrilled. "You had the look of a strong, capable type. Even adventurous. I could tell that by the way you stood there and let me come up to you. Not nervous or edgy. Not reaching for your gun."

"Gun? I carry no gun."

"Not even on Mars. In Marsport. Brother, you are the adventurous type. I've heard tales about this place. It's tough."

The bandaged head nodded in slow agreement. "Yes, people always thought Mars was pretty tough. Marsport, especially. And it was. But I've been in tougher. Much tougher. And nobody ever bothers me. Sometimes I bother them. People are a little shocked by my bandages. Maybe a little frightened."

"Your bandages," she said softly. "I didn't like to mention them. Afraid you might be sensitive"

The man laughed easily. "I am, but not in the way you mean. My feelings are calloused. I have to keep the bandages on most of the time because of the light. It's not so bad at night, but the skin on my face is tender, can't take sunlight. Synergy, I think it's called. Or allergy. Doesn't matter. But artificial light is not too bad. Would you like me to take off the bandages?"

The scavenger stopped walking and turned to face her as if her decision might

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be somehow important. His maneuver alerted the watchful escort who swiftly began closing the distance between them.

"No, no," screamed the girl in loud protest. "Leave the bandages on. Leave them on."

Her reaction was violent enough to amaze the scavenger. Darkly the eyeholes stared.

"I didn't mean to yell at you," she said apologetically, waving back the escort.

"You don't have to apologize to me."

"But I want to. You see," she explained carefully, "the bandages are part of the description. The scavenger hunt, I mean. Not exactly, of course, but close enough. I'm sure we'll win the game, if I have to quote dictionary definitions at them."

"I'm sure you'll win any game you play," said the bandaged man gallantly. "I'm certain you will if the judges are...male."

Laughing gaily, she linked arms with her willing captive. They walked on together, the girl suddenly conscious of steel-spring strength in muscles rippling inside the neatly patched sleeve.

"I'm glad you're not terribly self-conscious about the bandages," she murmured. "We wouldn't want to hurt your feelings, or make embarrassing awkwardness for you. We're really quite nice, all of us. And you'll like our party."

"I don't think you could hurt my feelings," he replied. "Don't let the bandages disturb you. I'm used to them. And if you're a sample of your party, I'm sure I'll enjoy the occasion."

"I'll see that you do. Was it a bad accident? Really bad?

"Very bad. But not in the way you mean. It wasn't a spaceship crack-up, or anything spectacular. I stubbed my toe."

"You're joking."

"No joke. I stubbed my toe at the wrong time and in the wrong place. I don't imagine you know Mercury. No tourists go there. No place for tourists. No place for anybody. People can live there, but only by extreme technical protection. I'm sure you know that one side always faces the Sun, so that side is terribly hot, and the other terribly cold. My downfall, literally, was on Sunside."

"I get shivers just thinking about places like Mercury. I can't understand how people can be brave enough to go there, or how they can endure living under such frightful conditions. If you'd rather not talk about it—"

"I said I didn't mind. We were a small expedition, out exploring. Not looking for anything in particular. A party of surveyors and engineers in various other fields. Mostly looking for information

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which might be valuable to later settlers. I was separated from the rest, and worried about getting back to them in time. We had an agreement about a deadline, and if anyone did not make his appearance, he had to be assumed dead. It's harsh, but the only practical way. I knew that if I ran into trouble, nobody would come looking for me, and I took that risk. We all did. It's a gamble, when you can't afford to lose. I lost."

"It must have been awful."

"Awful enough. I was hurrying to get back to the meeting place in time, before the others would have to leave. Nobody wants to be left behind, not on a planet like Mercury. The surface underfoot was uneven and treacherous. I stumbled and fell. The helmet faceplate, which filters light and insulates against heat was smashed. I lay there, paralyzed, nearly dead with shock and fear, looking up. There is nothing like it, not anywhere. That close-up view of a thermo-nuclear furnace. Which is our star, the Sun. All that light and heat, unbearable, and knowing there are deadlier wave-lengths on either side of the visible spectrum."

"But you lived through it. You got away somehow. You have to forget the horror of it."

"Yes, I lived through it. I got away. But forgetting the horror is something else. You don't forget horror like that. In the first seconds, your skin blisters and the flesh starts broiling. Skin dries and cracks and splits, the edges peel up, charring. You know that your eyes will boil out of their sockets. You can't scream, because there is no oxygen and practically no atmosphere. You are alone and dying, with no one to help."

"Don't talk about it," she said sympathetically. "Don't ever think of it again. No matter what it may have done to your face. Nobody will ask to see under the bandages. I promise you that."

"They would be disappointed," her companion said. His voice sounded tense, on the verge of hysteria. "I said there is nothing wrong now. It's just a face."

Some of her uneasiness returned, belatedly. "I wondered at first," she confessed. "You always wonder about bandages. They're like masks. In a sense, they are masks. And there is a touch of horror about masks. I thought you might be a monster, or something."

"Nothing like that," he said, voice muffled under the gauze. "Nothing to be surprised about, or shocked by. Just a face. Not even badly scarred. They took good care of me. Very good care. Everything is healed, and no scars show. The best and newest in plastic surgery."

"I'll take your word for it,

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but you always wonder. Like even those grotesque masks that children wear on holidays. They hint something sinister. Even wearing a mask at all suggests that you are concealing your face, because it is better concealed. Because someone might recognize you...as a criminal, perhaps."

"I'm not a criminal. I was once a famous man. My face was well known, but there is no reason to hide it. Nothing for which I need be ashamed of which I need be afraid. But I don't think you would recognize my face if you saw it. Nobody would, not now."

"Oh, come," she rallied him. "You're not as old as that. I can tell by your voice. Be honest. When did you leave Earth?"

He paused, as if numbering the passing years on mental fingertips.

"Must be ten years," he decided. "You couldn't have been more than ten or twelve then."

"All right," said the girl ruefully. "I've been nosey, so I'll answer your unspoken question. I was twelve ten years ago."

"Ten years," mused her companion aloud. "Just ten years, and I've lived ten million since that stumble on Mercury."

"You don't mean that literally, I hope."

"No, probably not. But there are different kinds of time. It was on Mercury that I made my great discovery. About time. And about teleportation. Or about matter transmission through space and time, by sheer will power. That's the way I travel now. By will power."

She laughed indulgently. "I've heard about people who could do that trick, but you're the first I've met who claimed he could do it. Can you, really?"

"Of course. But like a great many other things I've learned, the knowledge came too late."

"I wouldn't say so. You could sell the trick."

"I suppose I could. It's much better than traveling by slow, clumsy spaceship. But what would I buy with the money? There's nothing I want."

"Nothing you can't find in trashcans?"

He winced. She sensed the movement within his sleeve. She knew she had been cruel, but she resented his attitude about money. Money was important to her. And also, she resented the suspicion that her captive was pulling her leg with his fantasy about teleportation. Either that, or she had managed to pick up a prize lunatic. After all, if even part of his story happened to be true, such an experience could easily upset a mind.

"I'm sorry," she said, actually sorry she had said such

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a thing, but more frightened of having roused dangerous abberations in a possible mental case. Doubt chilled her slightly, and she realized she must be more careful what she said. Have to humor him, in any case.

"I suppose I deserved that," he admitted. "Preoccupation with trashcans is hardly a respectable hobby. It's worse than that with me. I go from world to world, poking into the trashcans and rubble of ancient and forgotten civilizations. I never find what I'm looking for, and I'm not sure what it is. Probably some clue to what happened. I'm a living paradox, and that's not something you can get used to. I keep hoping for an explanation of whatever happened to me. And to the others."

"That's logical," she decided nervously.

The girl quickened her footsteps. They were nearing the shipping center of Marsport. A broad, pockmarked expanse of open spaceport spread before them. Derricks and immense ship's cradles loomed in dark silhouette against the purple Martian sky.

They went among the towering silhouettes and paused at the foot of a great ramp, leading upward. Still trying to damp her uneasiness, the girl urged her captive upward.

There were people and conversation, there was crowding, drinking, some desultory dancing and a general air of conviviality. A spaceship, even one large enough to convey paying passengers in minimum comfort from planet to planet, is cramped quarters for a party. But this party had progressed well beyond the point where its constituents were feeling actual pain. There was much giggling, some shrill laughter, hysterical gaiety, and plain confusion.

"I'm sure we're the first team back," commented the girl. "I'm sure we'll win the prize unless they are stuffy about that old description."

"I hope you win" said the captive behind bandages.

"From here on, we'll need names," she said. "I'm Londi, and my team-mates are Grati and Elayo. Our sour-faced, chip-on-the-shoulder protector is Winky, but you've met him. I guess you have a name, but if you don't want to use it, we'll give you a new one."

"My name was Wright."

"Then it still is. Come on."

Steered into the midst of the milling groups, he let the confusion envelop him. He seemed to be drowning in it, but his partners formed a flying wedge, rescued him, and shouted to bring order out of chaos.

"Listen, everybody. We're back. We claim the prize."

A sleek, fat character, too

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full of vitamins and ethyl alcohol, bored pompously through to take an official attitude.

"I'm holding the stakes. So I'll judge whether or not you accomplished your mission. The official verdict will have to await the others, of course. But you are first back. You have won, if you completed your assignment."

"Our slip says to bring back a scavenger, a masked one."

The fat judge turned to the bandaged captive and snarled.

"Are you a scavenger? You don't look like one."

"I am. Ask Winky if I was scavenging."

"You don't have to sound so belligerent. I don't see any mask."

"What is a mask?" demanded Londi, sounding belligerent herself. "One of the dictionary definitions says: a face-covering of velvet or other cloth, worn to hide identity, for protection, or for and so forth. That covers a bandage, certainly."

The fat one licked his lips contemplatively, and backed water. "I see what you mean, and you have a point. But I won't pass on such a substitution. You can argue it out with the rest of the gang. Whenever they come back. I'll mark your time, and they can vote on whether or not you filled your requirement."

Londi made a face at him, then swept away her captive into a dance. "We've won," she exulted. "I know we've won."

"I'm very happy for you, if you have," said the bandaged man pleasantly. "And I'm very grateful for the delay which makes this delightful occasion last a little longer for me."

"Why does it have to end right away?" Londi asked. "I'd like to see you again. I'd like to...well, maybe I could do something for you."

"There's nothing anyone can do for me."

"Why do you keep turning your face away from the light? Is it too strong? Does it bother your eyes?"

"No. I have good eyes. It's only habit, turning away from brightness. A neurosis. Artificial light does not harm me. And it seems to lack the actinic rays of natural sunlight, which bring back my allergy, or synergy. I could take off my bandage right now, except that I'd rather not."

"I understand," she murmured. "I still think you were lucky to survive with nothing worse. No blindness, no scars, no monstrous horror where your face should be. I ordered you not to talk about it. Maybe that was a mistake. It might help to tell someone about it. Someone sympathetic, like me."

"If you're interested," he said disinterestedly. "But it's

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a pretty nasty subject for a nice party."

"Party!" she said, sneering. "Parties are always a bit grim to me. Like carnivals. Like people trying too hard to have a good time. The real pleasures of life are those things which happen unexpectedly, like this. Like talking with someone you've met by chance. Please tell me about your adventure."

"Adventure," he said bitterly. "I said it was a horror tale. I lay there. Faceplate smashed. Sunlight boring in. I don't know how long it was. Seconds can be eternities. Never in my life have I wanted so badly to be somewhere else. There are no words to describe the terrible longing. And I wanted to be elsewhere so badly that I willed myself there. Suddenly, and it must have been seconds only, or I'd have suffocated, I was elsewhere."

"You wished yourself back to earth. Just like that?"

"Not just like that—not to Earth. Not right away. I slipped up. I willed myself away from Mercury, but I forgot that a will-fulfillment like that requires both halves of the wish. I forgot to wish myself where I wanted to go. So I did not go back to Earth. I went into a time-stasis. That, too, is something words cannot describe. The term is meaningless. It is a mathematical concept, nothing more. But I was in a time-stasis."

"But you did get back to Earth."

"Yes, I got back to Earth. Not right away. To me, in the time-stasis, time had not existed. My broken blisters still ran fluid, and my burned skin still flamed. But I was too late. It was all over. Everything was all over. My people were gone. Not just the ones I knew, but all the generations after them. I was left. Alone. Terribly alone. Civilization had come and gone. The human race had flowered and withered, and even the dust was blown into the deserts of eternity."

Horror struck through Londi like chilled knifeblades.

"You said they took care of you," she challenged weakly "Who took care of you?"

He did not answer immediately. He turned his head away, and she could imagine those dark eyeholes boring back in time and space, remembering horror. He spoke again, hoarsely:

"Everybody was gone. Everybody human, and everything human. The rats had watched us, their beady eyes peering enviously from the woodwork, from the brush, waiting their turn. And now they had their turn. They took over where my people left off."

"Rats?" Linda's eyes were wondering.

"Yes. Rats. The rats had inherited the Earth. During the long centuries, they had developed into a dominant race.

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You would never believe how big they were. As tall as I was. Their forepaws had become hands. Wonderful hands. Surgeon's hands, as I had good reason to know. They were more efficient than humans. More skillful. And much kinder. They did a wonderful job on my face. No scars. I am very grateful to them."

"But all this is impossible," protested the girl. "Why, we only just left Earth. Nothing had happened. Everyone was still there. People."

The bandaged head nodded. "I know it's like that . . . now. But when I came back, I tried to tell them what it was like in my time. I told the rats. They laughed. Nobody remembered the human race. I must have been in the time-stasis millions of years. Millions of years past the end of the human race. I'm an anachronism, a living paradox."

"You're nothing of the kind," she said hopefully. "You're just someone who's been sick. You need care and understanding, and kindness. When we get out of this scramble, I'm going to see that you get proper care."

"You've been kind," he murmured.

The girl shuddered.

Fortunately, the other scavenger teams had been arriving. She saw the last group to return coming up the ramp into the ship, and snatched at the oppportunity to break up a contact which was rapidly becoming too much for her. She dragged her captive into the center of the room and greeted the new arrivals noisily.

"Hi! Hi, everybody. We've won, so you might as well vote on it, and then we can relax. But first I want all of you to meet a pal of mine. Mr. Wright. Everybody, Mr. Wright."

The usual joker pushed forward through the crowd and stared pointedly at the bandages.

"Hello, bud. How can we be sure if you're the right Mr. Wright, or the wrong one."

Mr. Wright laughed coldly.

"I don't think it will matter to you. Why not just say I'm the Mr. Wright who was left?"

The joker cackled. "That's a good one. Say, we could work up a comedy routine out of this."

"Isn't it one?"

Londi pushed angrily at her friend's tormentor. "Go away, you drunk. You're spoiling the party."

The joker persisted. "I won't go away. I want to see what's under the bandages. We may be entertaining angels unawares. Or devils. I want to see under the bandages."

Londi tried vainly to distract the attention of the

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crowd, tried to turn interest in another direction. But the means she chose was unfortunate.

"Stop it, everyone. Listen to me. You're acting like a bunch of animals. You're trying to make this man's personal misfortunes into an extravaganza. He was kind enough to come here, as a personal favor to me. I won't have him mistreated by anyone. Understand?"

She succeeded only in attracting the attention of the few previously disinterested.

"You're trying to make a show of this. There's nothing wrong with his face. He's just sensitive to light and has to wear the bandages to protect his skin. You're trying to make out he's something fantastic. Something horrible."

She halted for breath, then went on as breathlessly as before. "It's like that old story about the girl who was dancing with a man at a masquerade. When she unmasked at midnight with the rest, he didn't, and she asked him why, and he said, 'Mask? I wear no mask.' So she fainted. This friend of mine wears no mask, either. Because he doesn't need a mask. There's nothing under those bandages but a face. An ordinary face. Not scarred or anything. Just a face."

"How do you know it's an ordinary face?"

"He told me so."

Everyone in the room was looking at the stranger, trying to probe beneath the bandages.

He laughed bitterly, and the sound went echoing through the ship. Gaiety halted. Everyone waited.

"I was afraid this would come up," said the stranger.

"Afraid, of what?" echoed Londi, herself afraid.

"Afraid someone would ask the wrong question. Or ask me to take off my bandages. Afraid of what always happens."

His voice sounded sad, rather than menacing. Londi looked sharply at him. Some of her courage seeped back.

"But you said—" She faltered, voice crumbling to a shrill squeak.

"Everything I said was true. But this always happens this way. Wherever I go, whatever I do, no matter what world I am visiting. I knew it would happen here, tonight. But I only wanted to prolong the occasion as far possible, because I was enjoying myself. Enjoying good company."

He stopped for a moment, staring back at the crowd with his eyeholes which seemed empty sockets of darkness.

"I will take off my bandages. But before I do, I want to tell you about yourselves. I have been through this before, many times. I know who you are, what you are. I know that all of this is in my imag-

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ination. I know that you are ghosts. I know that none of you are real, that all real humans vanished many, many years ago. I know that when I take off my bandages, all of you will vanish, because my ghosts always vanish. And then I am alone again. Terribly alone..."

Slowly, as he talked, he started unwinding his bandage. Gauze unreeled, down from the hair, down from the forehead, down and down, showing eyes, nose, cheeks, mouth, chin. The skin bore faint crisscross of tiny scars, barely visible against the pale greyish pink of untanned skin. It was a face, as he said it would be. But there was something about the size and shape of features, their arrangement, the skin color. It was a man's face.

The crowd fell back, mouths open in horror. The males stared with beady eyes. Londi and her friends wrung delicate, tapering fingers together. Winky scratched at a tough and muscular wrist, ruffling the fine grey fuzz. Dr. Oatey stroked his long whiskers reflectively, consoling himself fearfully that science never admitted the existence of a prior race who called themselves humans.

The females started screaming, a shrill, squeaking babel of sound. They kept screaming.

But Mr. Wright was wrong. Instead of his imaginary ghosts vanishing, he vanished. Back into his time-stasis, or into whatever limbo of nightmare had spawned the human race.

On Mars, a scavenger hunt may turn anything—even a scavenger...

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the artifact business

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

"I came up with a neat cache of enamelled skulls today—a dozen of the Expansion with platinum scroll work."

The Voltuscian was a small, withered humanoid whose crimson throat-appendages quivered nervously, as if the thought of doing archaeological fieldwork excited him unbearably. He gestured to me anxiously with one of his four crooked arms, urging me onward over the level silt.

"This way, friend. Over here is the Emperor's grave."

"I'm coming, Dolbak." I trudged forward, feeling the weight of the spade and the knapsack over my shoulder. I caught up with him a few moments later.

He was standing near a rounded hump in the ground, pointing downward. "This is it," he said happily. "I have saved it for you."

I fished my pocket, pulled out a tinkling heap of arrow-shaped coins, and handed him one. The Voltuscian nodded his thanks effusively, and ran around behind me to help me unload.

Taking the spade from him, I thrust it into the ground and began to dig. The thrill of discovery started to tingle in me, as it does always when I begin a new excavation. I suppose that is the archae-

Robert Silverberg, one of the most interesting of the younger writers, returns with this story of Jarrell, Company Archaeologist, who—though he had never seen Earth—liked to believe (until reality caught up with him) that he worked in the great tradition of Schliemann and Evans . . . .

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ologist's greatest joy, that moment of apprehension as the spade first bites into the ground. I dug rapidly and smoothly, following Dolbak's guidance.

"There it is," he said reverently. "And a beauty it is, too. Oh, Jarrell-sir, how happy I am for you!"

I leaned on my spade to recover my wind before bending to look. I mopped away beads of perspiration, and thought of the great Schliemann laboring in the stifling heat of Hissarlik to uncover the ruins of Troy. Schliemann has long been one of my heroes—along with the other archaelogists who did the pioneer work in the fertile soil of Mother Earth.

Wearily, I stooped to one knee and fumbled in the fine sand of the Voltuscian plain, groping for the bright object that lay revealed. I worried it loose from its covering of silt and studied it.

"Amulet," I said after a while. "Third period; unspecified protective charm. Studded with emerald-cut gobrovirs of the finest water." The analysis complete, I turned to Dolbak and grasped his hand warmly. "How can I thank you, Dolbak?"

He shrugged. "Not necessary." Glancing at the amulet, he said, "It will fetch a high price. Some woman of Earth will wear it proudly."

"Ah—yes," I said, a trifle bitterly. Dolbak had touched on the source of my deep frustration and sorrow.

This perversion of archaeology into a source for trinkets and bits of frippery to adorn rich men's homes and wives has always rankled me. Although I have never seen Earth, I like to believe I work in the great tradition of Schliemann and Evans, whose greatest finds were to be seen in the galleries of the British Museum and the Ashmolean, not dangling on the painted bosom of some too-rich wench who has succumbed to the current passion for antiquity.

When the Revival came, when everyone's interest suddenly turned on the ancient world and the treasures that lay in the ground, I felt deep satisfaction—my chosen profession, I thought, now was one that had value to society as well as private worth. How wrong I was! I took this job in the hope that it would provide me with the needed cash to bring me to Earth—but instead I became nothing more than the hired lackey of a dealer in women's fashions, and Earth's unreachable museums lie inch-deep in dust.

I sighed and returned my attention to the excavation. The amulet lay there, flawless in its perfection, a marvelous relic of the great race that once inhabited Voltus. Masking my sadness, I reached down with both hands and

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lovingly plucked the amulet from the grave in which it had rested so many thousands of years.

I felt a sudden impulse to tip Dolbak again. The withered alien accepted the coins gratefully, but with a certain reserve that made me feel that perhaps this whole business seemed as sordid to him as it did to me.

"It's been a good day's work," I told him. "Lets go back, now. We'll get this assayed and I'll give you your commission, eh, old fellow?"

"That will be very good, sir," he said mildly, and assisted me in donning my gear once again.

We crossed the plain and entered the Terran outpost in silence. As we made our way through the winding streets to the assay office, hordes of the four-armed, purple-hued Voltuscian children approached us clamorously, offering us things for sale, things they had made themselves. Some of their work was quite lovely; the Voltuscians seem to have a remarkable aptitude for handicrafting. But I brushed them all away. I have made it a rule to ignore them, no matter how delightful a spun-glass fingerbowl they may have, how airy and delicate an ivory carving. Such things, being contemporary, have no market value on Earth, and a man of my limited means must avoid luxuries of this sort.

The assay office was still open, and I saw two or three men standing outside, each with his Voltuscian guide, as we approached.

"Hello, Jarrell," said a tall man raucously as I drew near.

I winced. He was David Sturges, one of the least scrupulous of the many Company archaeologists on Voltus—a man who thought nothing of breaking into the most sacred shrines of the planet and committing irreparable damage for the sake of ripping loose a single marketable item.

"Hello, Sturges," I said shortly.

"Have a good day, old man? Find anything worth poisoning you for?"

I grinned feebly and nodded. "Nice amulet of the Third Period. I'm planning on handing it in immediately, but if you prefer I won't. I'll take it home and leave it on my table tonight. That way you won't wreck the place looking for it."

"Oh, that won't be necessary," Sturges said. "I came up with a neat cache of enamled skulls today—a dozen, of the Expansion Era, set with platinum scrollwork." He pointed to his alien guide, a dour-looking Voltuscian named Qabur. "My boy found them for me. Wonderful fellow, Quabur. He came home on a cache as if he's got radar in his nose."

I began to frame a reply in

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praise of my own guide when Zweig, the assayer, stepped to the front of his office and looked out. "Well, who's next? You, Jarrell?"

"Yes, sir." I picked up my spade and followed him inside. He slouched down behind his desk and looked up wearily.

"What do you have to report, Jarrell?"

I drew the amulet out of my knapsack and handed it across the desk. He examined it studiously, noticing the way the light glinted off the facets of the inset gobrovirs, and looked up. "Not bad," he said.

"It's a rather fine piece, isn't it?"

"Not bad," he repeated. "Seventy-five dollars, I'd say."

"*What?* I'd figured that piece for at least five hundred! Come on, Zweig, be reasonable. Look at the quality of those gobrovirs!"

"Very nice," he admitted. "But you have to understand that the gobrovir, while it's attractive, is intrinsically not a very valuable gem. And I must consider the intrinsic value as well as the historical, you know."

I frowned. Now would come the long speech about supply and demand, the scarcity of gems, the cost of shipping the amulet back to Earth, marketing, on and on, on and on. I spoke before he had the chance. "I won't haggle, Zweig. Give me a hundred and fifty or I'll keep the thing myself."

He grinned slyly. "What would *you* do with it? Donate it to the British Museum?"

The remark stung. I looked at him sadly, and he said, "I'll give you a hundred."

"Hundred and fifty or I keep."

He reached down and scooped ten ten-dollar pieces from a drawer. He spread them out along his desk. "There's the offer," he said. "It's the best the Company can do."

I stared at him for an agonized moment, then scowled, took the ten tens, and handed over the amulet. "Here. You can give me thirty pieces of silver for the next one I bring in."

"Don't make it hard for me, Jarrell. This is only my job."

I threw one of the tens to the waiting Dolbak, nodded curtly, and walked out.

I returned to my meager dwelling on the outskirts of the Terran colony in a state of deep dejection. Each time I handed an artifact over to Zweig—and, in the course of the eighteen months since I had accepted this accursed job, I had handed over quite a few—I felt, indeed, a Judas. When I thought of the long row of glass cases my discoveries might have filled, in, say, the Voltus Room of the British, I ached. The crystal shields with double hand-

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grips; the tooth-wedges of finest obsidian; the sculptured ear-binders with their unbelievable filigree of sprockets—these were products of one of the most fertile creative civilizations of all, the Old Voltuscians—and these treasures were being scattered to the corners of the galaxy as trinkets.

The amulet today—what had I done with it? Turned it over to—to a *procurer,* virtually, to ship back to Earth for sale to the highest bidder.

I glanced around my room. Small, uncluttered, with not an artifact of my own in it. I had passed every treasure across the desk to Zweig; I had no wish to retain any for myself. I sensed that the antiquarian urge was dying in me, choked to death by the wild commercialism that entangled me from the moment I signed the contract with the Company.

I picked up a book—Evans, *The Palace of Minos*—and looked at it balefully for a moment before replacing it on the shelf. My eyes throbbed from the day's anguish; I felt dried out, and very tired.

Someone knocked at the door—timidly at first, then more boldy.

"Come in," I said.

The door opened slowly and a small Voltuscian stepped in. I recognized him—he was an unemployed guide, too unreliable to be trusted. "What do you want, Kushkak?" I asked wearily.

"Sir? Jarrel-sir?"

"Yes?"

"Do you need a boy, sir? I can show you the best treasures, sir. Only the best—the kind you get good price for."

"I have a guide already," I told him. "Dolbak. I don't need another, thanks."

The alien seemed to wrinkle in on himself. He hugged his lower arms to his sides unhappily. "Then I am sorry I disturbed you, Jarrell-sir. Sorry. Very sorry."

I watched him back out despairingly. All of these Voltuscians seemed to me like withered old men, even the young ones. They were an utterly decadent race, with barely a shred of the grandeur they must have had in the days when the great artifacts were being produced. It was odd, I thought, that a race should shrivel so in the course of a few thousand years.

I sank into an uneasy repose in my big chair. About half past twenty-three another knock sounded.

"Come in," I said, a little startled.

The gaunt figure of George Darby stepped through the door. Darby was an archaeologist who shared many of my ideals, shared my passionate desire to see Earth, shared my distaste for the bondage into which we had sold ourselves.

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"What brings *you* here so late, George?" I asked, adding the conventional "And how was your trip today?"

"My trip? Oh, my trip!" He seemed s t r a n g e l y excited. "Yes, my trip. You know my boy Kushkak?"

I nodded. "He was just here looking for a job. I didn't know he'd been working with you."

"Just for a couple of days," Darby said. "He agreed to work for five percent, so I took him on."

I made no comment. I knew how things could pinch.

"He was here, eh?" Darby frowned. "You didn't hire him, did you?"

"Of course not!" I said.

"Well, I did. But yesterday he led me in circles for five hours before admitting he didn't really have any sites in mind so I canned him. and that's why I'm here?"

"Why? Who'd you go out with today?"

"No one," Darby said bluntly. "I went out alone." For the first time, I noticed that his fingers were quivering, and in the dreary half-light of my room his face looked pale and drawn.

"You went out alone?" I repeated. "Without a guide?"

Darby nodded, running a finger nervously through his unruly white forelock. "It was half out of n e c e s s i t y—I couldn't find another boy in time—and half because I wanted to strike out on my own. The guides have a way of taking you to the same area of the Burial Ground all the time, you know. I headed in the other direction. Alone."

He fell silent for a moment. I wondered what it was that troubled him so.

After a pause he said, "Help me off with my knapsack."

I eased the straps from his shoulders and lowered the gray canvas bag to a chair. He undid the r u s t e d clasps, reached in, and drew something out tenderly. "Here," he said. "What do you make of this, Jarrell?"

I took it from him with great care and examined it closely. It was a bowl, scooped by hand out of some muddy looking black clay. Fingermarks stood out raggedly, and the bowl was unevenly shaped and awkward-looking. It was an extremely uncouth-job.

"What is it?" I asked. "Prehistoric, no doubt."

Darby smiled unhappily. "You think so Jarrell?"

"It must be," I said. "Look at it—I'd say it was made by a child, if it weren't for the size of these fingerprints in the clay. It's very ancient or else the work of an idiot."

He nodded. "A logical attitude. Only—I found this in the stratum *below* the bowl." And he handed me a gilded tooth-wedge in Third Period style.

"This was *below* the bowl?" I asked, confused. "The bowl

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is more recent than the tooth-wedge, you're saying?"

"Yes," he said quietly. He knotted his hands together. "Jarrell, here's my conjecture, and you can take it for as much as you think it's worth. Let's discount the possibility that the bowl was made by an idiot, and let's not consider the chance that it might be a representative of a decadent period in Voltuscian pottery that we know nothing about.

"What I propose," he said, measuring his words carefully, "is that the bowl dates from classical antiquity—three thousand years back, or so. And that the tooth-wedge you're admiring so is perhaps a year old, maybe two at the outside."

I nearly dropped the tooth-wedge at that. "Are you saying that the Voltuscians are hoaxing us?"

"I'm saying just that," Darby replied. "I'm saying that in those huts of theirs—those huts that are taboo for us to enter—they're busy turning out antiquities by the drove, and planting them in proper places where we can find them and dig them up."

It was an appalling concept. "What are you going to do?" I asked. "What proof do you have?"

"None, yet. But I'll get it. I'm going to unmask the whole filthy thing," Darby said vigorously. "I intend to hunt down Kushkak and throttle the truth out of him, and let the universe know that the Voltuscian artifacts are frauds, that the *real* Old Voltuscian artifacts are muddy, ugly things of no esthetic value and of no interest to—anyone—but—us—archaeologists," he finished bitterly.

Bravo, George!" I applauded. "Unmask it, by all means. Let the philistines who have over paid for these pieces find out that they're *not* ancient, that they're as modern as the radiothermal stoves in their over-furnished kitchens. That'll sicken 'em—since they won't *touch* anything that's been in the ground less than a few millenia, ever since this Revival got under way."

"Exactly," Darby said. I sensed the note of triumph in his voice. "I'll go out and find Kushkak now. He's just desperate enough to speak up. Care to come along?"

"No—no," I said quickly. I shun violence of any sort. "I've got some letters to write. You take care of it."

He packed his two artifacts up again, rose, and left. I watched him from my window as he headed across the unpaved streets to the liquor-dispensary where Kushkak was usually to be found. He entered—and a few minutes later I heard the sound of voices shouting in the night.

The news broke the next morning, and by noon the village was in a turmoil.

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Kushkak, taken unawares, had exposed all. The Voltuscians—brilliant handicrafters, as everyone knew—had attempted to sell their work to the wealthy of Earth for years, but there had been no market. "Contemporary? Pah!" What the customers wanted was *antiquity*.

Unable to market work that was labelled as their own, the Voltuscians had obligingly shifted to the manufacture of antiquities, since their ancestors had been thoughtless enough not to leave them anything more marketable than crude clay pots. Creating a self-consistent ancient history that would appeal to the imaginations of Earthmen was difficult, but they rose to the challenged and developed one to rank with that of Egypt and Babylonia and the other fabled cultures of Earth. After that, it was a simple matter of designing and executing the artifacts.

Then, they were buried in the appropriate strata. This was a difficult feat, but the Voltuscians managed it with ease, restoring the disrupted strata afterward with the same skill for detail as they employed in creating the artifacts. The pasture thus readied, they led the herd to feast.

I looked at the scrawny Voltuscians with new respect in my eyes. Obviously they must have mastered the techniques of archaeology before inaugurating their hoax, else they would never have handled the strata relationships so well. They had carried the affair flawlessly—until the day when one of the Earthmen had unkindly disinterred a *real* Voltuscian artifact.

Conditions were still chaotic when I entered the square in front of the assay office later that afternoon. Earthmen and Voltuscians milled aimlessly around, not knowing what to do next or where to go.

I picked up a rumor that Zweig was dead by his own hand, but this was promptly squelched by the appearance of the assayer in person, looking rather dreadfully upset but still living. He came to the office and hung up a hastly-scrawled card. It read:

NO BUSINESS
TRANSACTED TODAY

I smiled, then saw Dolbak go wandering by and called to him. "I'm ready to go out," I said innocently.

He looked at me, pity in his lidless eyes. "Sir, haven't you *heard?* There will be no more trips to the Burial Grounds."

"Oh? This thing is true, then?"

"Yes," he said sadly. "It's true."

Obviously he couldn't bear to talk further. He moved on, and I spotted Darby.

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"You seem to have been right," I told him. "The whole thing's fallen apart."

"Of course. Once they were confronted with Kushkak's story, they saw the game was up. They're too fundamentally honest to try to maintain the pretense in the face of our accusation."

"It's too bad in a way," I said. "Those things they turned out *were* lovely, you know."

"Just a second, friend," said a deep voice from behind us. We turned to see David Sturges glaring bitterly.

"What do *you* want?" Darby asked.

"I want to know why you couldn't keep your mouth shut," said Sturges. "Why'd you have to ruin this nice set-up for us? What difference did it make if the artifacts were the real thing or not? As long as people were willing to lay down cash for them, why rock the boat?"

Darby sputtered impotently at the bigger man, but said nothing.

"You've wrecked the whole works," Sturges went on. "What do you figure to do for a living now? Can you afford to go to another planet?"

"I did what was right," Darby said.

Sturges snorted derisively and walked away. I looked at Darby. "He's got a point, you know. We're going to have to go to another planet now. Voltus isn't worth a damn. You've succeeded in uprooting us and finishing the Voltuscian economy at the same time. Maybe you *should* have kept quiet."

He looked at me stonily for a moment. "Jarrell I think I've overestimated you."

A ship came for Zweig the next day, and the assay office closed down permanently. The Company wouldn't touch Voltus again. The crew of the ship went rapidly through the Terran outpost distributing leaflets that informed us that the Company still required our services and could use us on other planets—provided we paid our own fares.

That was the catch. None of us had saved enough, out of the fees we had received from the Company, to get off Voltus. It had been the dream of all of us to see Earth someday, to explore the world from which our parent stock sprang—but it had been a fool's dream. At Company rates, we could never save enough to leave.

I began to see that perhaps Darby *had* done wrong in exposing the hoax. It certainly didn't help us, and it was virtually the end of the world for the natives. In one swoop, a boundless source of income was cut off and their precarious economy totally wrecked. They moved silently through the quiet streets, and any day I expected to see the vultures perch on the rooftops.

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Three days after the bubble burst, a native boy brought me a note. It was from David Sturges, and it said, briefly, "There will be a meeting at my flat tonight."

When I arrived I saw that the entire little colony of Company archaeologist was there—even Darby.

"Good evening, Jarrell," Sturges said politely as I entered. "I think everyone's here now, and so we can begin." He cleared his throat.

"Gentlemen, some of you have accused me of being unethical," he said. "Even dishonest. You needn't deny it. I *have* been unethical. However," he said, frowning, "I find myself caught in the same disaster that has overtaken all of you, and just as unable to extricate myself. Therefore, I'd like to make a small suggestion."

"What's on your mind, Sturges?"

"This morning," he said, "one of the aliens came to me with an idea. It's a good one. Briefly, he suggested that, as expert archaeologists, we teach the Voltuscians how to manufacture *Terran* artifacts. There's no more market for anything from Voltus—but why not continue to take advantage of the skills of the Voltuscians as long as the market's open for things of Earth? We could smuggle the artifacts to Earth, plant them, have them dug up again and sold there—and we'd make the entire profit, not just the miserable fee the Company allows us!"

"It's shady, Sturges," Darby said hoarsely. "I don't like the idea."

"How do you like the idea of starving?" Sturges retorted. "We'll rot on Voltus unless we use our wits."

I stood up. "Perhaps I can make things clearer to Dr. Darby," I said. "George, we're caught in a cleft stick and all we can do is try to wriggle. We can't get off Voltus, and we can't stay here. If we accept Sturges' plan, we'll build up a cash reserve in a short time. We'll be free."

Darby remained unconvinced. He shook his head. "I can't condone counterfeiting Terran artifacts. No—if you try it, I'll expose you!"

A stunned silence fell over the room at the threat. Sturges glanced appealingly at me, and I moistened my lips. "You don't seem to understand, George. Once we have this new plan working, it'll spur *genuine* archaeology. Look—we dig up half a dozen phony scarabs in the Nile Valley. People buy them—and we keep on digging, with the profits we make. Earth experiences a sudden interest; there's a rebirth of archaeology. We dig up *real* scarabs."

His eyes brightened, but I could see he was still unpersuaded. I added my clincher.

"Besides, George, someone

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will have to go to Earth to supervise this project."

I paused, caught Sturges' silent approval. "I think," I said sonorously, "that it is the unanimous decision of this assembly that we nominate our greatest expert on Terran antiquity to handle the job on Earth—Dr. George Darby."

I didn't think he would be able to resist that. I was right.

Six months later, an archaeologist working near Gizeh turned up a scarab of lovely design, finely-worked and inlaid with strange jewels.

In a paper published in an obscure journal to which most of us subscribe, he conjectured that this find represented an outcrop of a hitherto-unknown area of Egyptology. He also sold the scarab to a jewelry syndicate for a staggering sum, and used the proceeds to finance an extensive exploration of the entire Nile Valley, something that hadn't been done since the decline of archaeology more than a century earlier.

Shortly afterward, a student working in Greece came up with a remarkable Homeric shield.

What had been a science as dead as alchemy suddenly blossomed into new life; the people of Earth discovered that their own world contained riches as desirable as those on Voltus and Dariak and the other planets the Companies had been mining for gewgaws, and that they were also much less costly.

The Voltuscian workshops are now going full blast, and the only limitation on our volume is the difficulty of smuggling the things to Earth and planting them. We're doing quite well financially, thank you. Darby, who's handling the job brilliantly on Earth, sends us a fat check every month, which we divide equally among ourselves after paying the Voltuscians.

Occasionally I feel regret that it was Darby and not myself who won the coveted job of going to Earth, but I reconcile myself with the awareness that there was no other way to gain Darby's sympathies. I've learned things about ends and means. Soon, we'll all be rich enough to travel to Earth, if we want to.

But I'm not so sure I *do* want to go. There was a *genuine* Voltuscian antiquity, you know, and I've become as interested in that as I am in that of Greece and Rome. I see an opportunity to do some pure archaeology in a virgin field of research.

So perhaps I'll stay here after all. I'm thinking of writing a book on Voltuscian artifacts—the *real* ones, I mean, all crude things of no commercial value whatever. And tomorrow I'm going to show Dolbak how to make Aztec pottery of the Chichimec period. It's attractive stuff. I think there ought to be a good market for it.

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pfui on psi

by . . L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

About every ten strokes, the friction between my fingers and the paper rose markedly for two-three strokes, as if . .

Perhaps you have been perturbed by statements in SF magazines about psionic effects, or direct effects of mind on matter outside the brain. These statements appear not only in articles, editorials, and book-reviews. They assume that the reality of psionic effects has been proved; that they are based on incontestible "facts"; and that if you don't agree, you're a barnacled old reactionary of the kind who persecuted Galileo and sneered at Columbus.

The reason for your discomfort is that, even if you haven't studied the matter, you feel in a vague way that, if psionic effects are real, something must be wrong with all the rest of science. Telekinesis and precognition, to take the most egregious examples, defy logical, plausible explanation.

Well, cheer up. Whatever is wrong with science-as-it-now stands, you need not believe in psionics to keep your franchise as a sane, sensible, scientifically-minded man.

Between the realms of magic and science lies a shadowy borderland where dwell

L. Sprague de Camp, author of LOST CONTINENTS (Gnome Press) and other works, explores a question of considerable interest to SF readers in this provocative article on Psionics. Are psionic effects "facts" that cannot be gainsaid and Psionics the key to understanding the forces around us? Is criticism permissible — or rank heresy?

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explorers, exiles, and spies from both. Here magicians pose as scientists, scientists act like magicians, and scientists try to investigate magic scientifically.

One region they explore is the old concept of a mind that acts outside the body, either on another mind or on material things. The idea of such mental action is as old as magic and religion. Gods and spirits have always been thought of as disembodied or disembodiable minds with powers of clairvoyance (seeing through opaque obstacles), telepathy (speaking by direct mind-to-mind contact), telekinesis (moving material things by mental force), and precognition (prophecy). Tribal priests and magicians have also claimed to exercise these powers with the help of gods and spirits. An idea so firmly held for so long by so many is not readily given up.

A century ago appeared a class of magicians called spiritualist mediums. These, too, claimed clairvoyance, telepathy, and the rest. Most claimed to exercise these powers by the help of spirits of the dead.

Soon after, some academic people, first in Britain and then elsewhere, began to examine these claims. The first organized group of these psionicists. (as we may call them) was the British Society for Psychical Research, founded 1882.

Early mediums flaunted telekinetic powers—noises, object-throwing, table-tipping, horn-blowing, slate-writing and levitation. This is called physical mediumship, as contrasted with mental mediumship — clairvoyance, telepathy, and precognition. As the researchers got more skilled, they found that whenever they put a medium under rigorous control, either the medium was caught faking, or the effects stopped, or the medium refused to go on.

Many people wrote books asserting that certain mediums had proved that these powers did indeed exist. An author often chose a single medium, sometimes averring that this subject was the only genuine medium ever observed.

A study of the enormous literature* on this subject, shows that none of these mediums has a clear record. Those who were never caught in fakery, like Stainton Moses, never worked under close control. It is said that the Schneider brothers produced real effects—but Willi Schneider stopped making magic when the SPR put him under close control. His brother Rudi created effects under close control for the SPR in 1929-31—but then he

*For an introduction to this literature, see the notes in *Science*, No. 3165 (26 Aug. 1955) p. 367.

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was photographed cheating. Mina Crandon, "Margery the Medium," won many adherents in Boston—but she was seen faking, and years later one of her confederates gave the story of the plot to the newspapers.

As a result of these failures by physical mediums, interest shifted towards mental mediumship, and most of the respectable research is done by professors like Rhine in America and Soal in Britain, outside the Societies of Physical Research. The SPR's have largely degenerated into mere spiritualist clubs, devoted to protecting mediums from exposure rather than to exposing them. For instance, when the editor of the American SPR's journal printed the news of Margery's exposure, the pro-Margery officers of the Society promptly fired him.

All science-fiction readers have heard of psi-powers. This term was coined by Dr. Joseph Banks Rhine of Duke University, leader of the American psionicists. The term includes extra-sensory perception (clairvoyance, telepathy, and precognition) and what Rhine calls psychokinesis (the telekinesis of other writers). The psionic concept has become a standard prop of science fiction along with the blaster and the hyper-drive. Rhine has gathered a mass of statistics which, he says, powers are erratic and decline have such powers, though the powers are erratic and decline with use.

This study is called parapsychology or psionics. Some science-fiction people, not satisfied with using this concept in stories, assert that these powers have now been proved real once and for all.

A leading SF personality, John W. Campbell Jr., investigates machines that react to psionic forces. He started with a gadget for analyzing minerals by their "eloptic radiation," patented by T. G. Hieronymous. (See *Astounding SF*, June, 1956.) The radiations are picked up by a tuned electrical circuit. They are collected in an electrode, radiated through a slit and a glass prism, collected by another electrode, amplified, and detected by the observer's stroking a plastic plate with his fingers.

So far the device looks like Goldbergian nonsense. Campbell says he does not believe Hieronymous' eloptic theory. This is not surprising. "Eloptic" comes from a rare Greek word *elops* or *ellops*. This is either an adjective meaning "mute" or a noun meaning "fish." "Eloptic" thus seems to mean "fishy," and this contraption looks fishy if anything ever did.

Campbell, however, claims one can still get feelings in one's finger by stroking the

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plate. The effect is real, he says; it is only the explanation that's wrong. The true explanation is the presence of psionic forces. To demonstrate, he has persuaded a lot of people to stroke the plate and say that the plate felt sticky or greasy at some point when the tuning-knob was turned.

Then Campbell got rid of the pseudo-electrical gadgetry and substituted a drawing of an equivalent electrical circuit, mounted inside the original housing of the Hieronymous machine. Where the original device had a three pentode amplifier, Campbell put a symbol for a single pentode in his diagram. Still people felt the plate turn sticky or greasy. It is not surprising that an imaginary device should give imaginary results.

What should we believe about these claims? Anybody may believe what he likes, but what is the logical, rational, scientific attitude?

From time to time, men announce they have found a new science. They set up a branch of research, or a school of thought, or a cult, centered around this discovery. Sometimes, as with the heliocentric theory of the solar system, they are right. Sometimes, as with astrology, they are wrong.

When these revelations appear, how do you tell right from wrong? There is *no* sure, simple way. The best test is to repeat all the experiments yourself, but this is often impractical.

Failing that, you can to some extent judge the claims of the new school from internal evidence. This may not always lead you to the right conclusions, but it may be the best you can do. Thus, if the leader shows the stigmata of the quack (egomania etc.) the chances are against his being right. On the other hand, you cannot infer that, because the leader seems honest, earnest, and intelligent, his theory is right. The history of science is strewn with the wrecks of wrong ideas put forth by honest, intelligent men.

Two other ways of judging a theory are to ask whether its phenomena can be objectively recorded and reproduced, and whether its results seem to add up, to make sense, to fit together into a logical, consistent scheme.

Do the alleged psionic phenomena qualify on either count? No. They are admittedly sporadic and fugitive. Some investigators report fantastic runs in card-guessing experiments, like the feat of a young man named Pearce who correctly guessed all twenty-five cards in a Zener pack while sitting in an automobile with Rhine. (A Zener pack is a pack of thick cards with five cards of each of five designs: a circle, a

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square, a star, a cross, and a set of wavy lines.) Others get no results whatever. The phenomena cannot be produced on demand. Parapsychologists admit this; but there are other phenomena, like ball lightning, of which the same can be said. Still, if we cannot have our psionics when we want it, one reason for believing in it disappears.

Well then, do the results make sense? No, not if by "sense" you mean that they fit into the rest of the well-established body of science.

For instance, when we try to think of psionic powers, we think first of radiation. But psionics does not work like any known radiation. It does not seem affected by distance. It pays no attention to shielding. It has an incredible selectivity, so a clairvoyant can "read" a Zener card in the middle of the deck without confusing it with the adjacent cards. A telepath "speaks" with another hundreds of miles away, unaffected by the mental broadcasts of millions of other minds within the same radius. It ignores the position of the target; that is, whether a Zener card is facing the seer or edge-on to him.

All other human faculties have bodily structures to account for them; not so with psionics. Ordinarily human faculties get sharper with practice, but psionics does the reverse.

Some researchers claim to have proved telekinesis and precognition. If telekinesis be true, how can the mind shoot out a pair of psychic tweezers to grab a die in mid-flight and bring it down the desired side up? As for precognition, suppose the subject foresees that a certain card will be on top after the pack is shuffled. Then if the experimenter *doesn't* shuffle the pack, where is the future event that the subject "saw through time"?

Dr. Rhine says: forget radiations and psychic tweezers. They are false analogies from the materialistic, "physicalistic" view of the universe. This view is wrong. The real universe is something spiritual.

But this is explaining one unknown by another unknown. The principle to apply is that of Laplace: "The weight of the evidence should be proportional to the strangeness of the facts." Thus if a man who has been in Africa says he saw a herd of elephants in Africa, I do not require much corroboration. But if he says he saw a herd of elephants in the Adirondack Mountains, I demand strong evidence and lots of corroboration before I believe him.

Likewise, when somebody's claims about mental powers involve turning everything that science has learned upside down and inside out, the evidence ought to be frightfully strong. It ought to be as

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strong, say, as if a geographer asserted that the world was not round after all, but flat, as Wilbur Voliva always maintained.

The same objections apply *a fortiori* to the Hieronymous machines. Here the gadget not only fails to make sense. It not only fails to give consistent results. It does not give any objective results at all. We stroke the box and tell how our fingers feel. This is the rankest subjectivism. The human sensory system is not built for exact scientific measurements and is notoriously bad at it.

As Campbell says, in any new science you have to use such crude methods of detection at first, because the right kinds of meters have not been invented. On the other hand, subjective feelings have led investigators wildly astray. They led Reichenbach into "odic rays," Baraduc and Kilmer into "auras," and others into other blind alleys. While such methods may have to be used *faute de mieux*, a man's saying he sees or feels something that others do not is not in itself proof that there is anything there.

Psionicists try to flatten opposition by repeating over and over that certain things are "facts." But calling something a fact does not make it one. Lots of "facts" put forward to support psionics are at least doubtful.

For instance, in the 1880's, researchers tested the clairvoyant powers of the young daughters of a British clergyman named Creery. In time the Creery girls were caught cheating by spoken codes.

Well, three psionicists mention the Creery children in their writings. Harry Price says simply they cheated. G. N. M Tyrrell blandly states that the girls got results far beyond chance but says nothing about their exposure. Rhine mentions the fraud by whitewashes the little hoaxers on the ground that "it is a poor kind of cheating which grows worse by practice." This is an illogical objection, for, while the girls might become more skillful fakers with p r a c t i c e, the investigators would become sharper detectives.

So, you see, your idea of the "facts" depends on which book you read.

Campbell has cited as examples of telekinesis, the self-levitation of D.D. Home and the table-raising of Eusapia Paladino. What happened? Home never worked under rigid control. He did his levitation-act in almost total darkness, without control, before a trio of enthusiastic friends who later wrote contradictory accounts of the event.

Signora P a l a d i n o was caught at a seance in New York in 1910. Two physics researchers (rather unsport-

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ingly) dressed in black to be invisible in the darkened room. They crawled under Eusapia's table and found her tossing the table about with the muscular toes of one large bare foot. She was also caught in England when examiners relaxed precautions and suddenly tightened them when she had become overconfident. Her main trick was to persuade her inquisitors they were in contact with both her feet or hands when they were only touching one, while she did her act with the free member. When control was tightened so that this simple trick became impossible, either she got angrily excited and refused to go on, or nothing happened at all. This is an old story in psychic research.

After Eusapia's exposure. European savants went on testing her on the naive ground that, although she did c h e a t, she also made real phenomena. They thought themselves so clever at detecting legerdemain that if they didn't see it it did not exist.

So much for "facts." How, then, can psionic results be explained? The first possibility is, of course, that psionicists have really found ways by which minds can work directly on thing outside their bodies. This idea meets enormous difficulties when we try to fit it into what we already know about the universe.

As Campbell has said, what is needed is not just a set of alleged facts, inexplicable by any known science. What is needed is a theory, even a wrong one to connect the facts up and make sense of them. And, though intelligent people have been working on this problem for nearly a century, no such theory has come up. As things stand, I find it easier to believe in elves than in the p o w e r s claimed for psionics.

Science has gone through this sort of thing before. Alleged facts that could not be explained have come up. Sometimes they were found to be true facts, and a rational explanation was at length devised. Thus fossils puzzled scientists for two thousand years before they agreed that they were relics of former life-forms. But in phrenology and numerology, the facts turned out to be fictions and the explanations never did make sense. Unless and until a logical theory can be devised and confirmed by more facts, the chances are heavily against the mind-acting-on-matter idea.

What are the other possible explanations? They are error, fraud, and self-deception.

Some of Rhine's critics have said his probability-mathematics are wrong, but some at least of these criticisms are unsound. Some obscoring subjects for further

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tests, on the ground that this would bias the results. This objection is invalid as long as Rhine either reports *all* the results, both of high-scoring and of low-scoring subjects, or reports only the results from high-scoring subjects and these only *after* they have been selected, omitting the preliminary tests by which these champions were chosen. If you flip ten pennies ten times each, you cannot, by selecting the penny that came down "heads" most often, count on getting more heads than tails from that penny thereafter-unless the penny has a permanent bias towards heads.

Critics also object that the Zener cards tend to fall into "patterns" which the subjects could learn. The fallacy that random events fall into predictable patterns is what makes gamblers lose their shirts trying to beat roulette-wheels by "systems".

On the other hand, as Bridgman points out, mere failure of a series of events to follow a chance or random pattern, as in the case of Zener-card guessing, is not, by itself, positive evidence for speculative hypothesis like the existence of an unknown mental faculty, expecially when the nonchance event does not occur in any regular, repeatable, predictable way.

Some critics cry "fraud." George R. Price's celebrated piece in *Science* for 26 August, 1955, "Science and the Supernatural," implied this charge, on the ground that it is easier to believe that men lie than that all the rest of science is mistaken. Rhine and Soal were indignant.*

However, as Price remarked, he had not accused them personally of fakery. To produce statistical biases, *all* members of a group of researchers need not conspire to commit a faud. One or two will do. Fraud does occur in science, and an air of rectitude is no guarantee against it. Charles Dawson's respectability did not stop him from perpetrating the Piltdown and other hoaxes. Harry Price, leading British psychic researcher for half a century, was found by the British SPR to have faked many of the effects he claimed to observe.

The ideal conditions for scientific fraud seem to be an unwary, enthusiastic experimenter and a less scrupulous assistant who fudges the results. The fakery may be done for any of many reasons: fame, fortune, fanaticism, or just fun. When, sixty years ago, Henri Moissan was trying to make synthetic diamonds, an assistant got so bored with doing the same lengthly experiment over and

**Science*, No. 3184 (6 Jan. 1956).

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over that he slipped some bits of industrial diamond into the mixture to please the old man and end the runs. Moissan died thinking he had made diamonds, and the truth did not come out until later.

Could something like this be the case at Duke? Well, people who know Rhine tell me he is so noble and idealistic that he assumes everybody else to be as honest as himself, and so loveable that nobody who saw him being hornswoggled would disclose the fact for fear of hurting him. Oliver Lodge and Conan Doyle were men of this kind and were mercilessly hoaxed by mediums.

Moreover, Rhine prefers as helpers undergraduates of the jolly, extroverted, enthusiastic, salesmanlike type rather than dour analytical skeptics. He thus picks the kind most likely to hoax him.

Nor is Rhine's own attitude objective. Because he thinks psionics will help mankind by restoring "spiritual" values, he is keenly enthusiastic when a subject does a good run and bitterly disappointed when one does not. He says so himself.

Of course, if Rhine were a cooly objective man who did not care how his results came out so long as they were accurate, he would probably not feel strongly enough about psionics to have done his experiments at all. This is an old dilemma of science. The aggressive enthusiast is the man most likely to get results but also the man most likely to go on wild-goose chases.

Then there is self-deception, which can take many forms. It can be refusal to notice unfavorable evidence or dishonesty on the part of one's associates. All of us have this tendency, and when strongly developed it has led many high-minded intellectuals down weird garden paths of pseudo-science.

Self-deception can be a tendency to make biased errors. ESP tests have been run at Yale and the results recorded both mechanically, by a movie-camera, and by the usual method of calling out the names of cards and writing them down. When results were compared, it was found that those who believed in ESP consistently erred in favor of ESP, while those who did not made mistakes in the opposite direction.

The answer to this problem is to record all results mechanically. Leading psionicists, however, show a suspicious aversion to mechanical recordings. They say they are too expensive.

There are interesting possibilities, yet unexplored, in unconscious fraud. If, for instance, the psionicist has a split personality, the submerged part of the personality might fake results with-

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out the dominant parts knowledge. Moreover, human memory is extremely tricky. People so readily forget real events that they want to forget, and remember things that never happened but which they wish had happened, that no observations about matters on which people feel strongly can be taken as gospel.

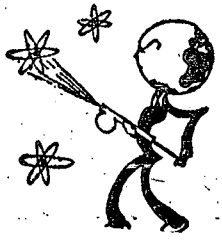
Nor can subjective reactions to the feel of a plastic plate be taken seriously. I have my own idea about these changes in feel. While writing this, it occurred to me that if feeling varies when you stroke a meaningless machine, perhaps it varies if you stroke anything. Nearby lay a copy of *Time* for 5 November, 1956, bearing on its cover the face of a political personality. I stroked his face (an act with no political significance). Sure enough, the sensation began to vary after fifteen to thirty strokes. About every ten strokes, the friction between my fingers and the paper rose markedly for two or three strokes.

After I had gone through this routine several times, the obvious explanation struck me. My arm was getting tired so that I was bearing down harder. When the contact got so strong that the magazine began to slide about, I put more effort into holding up my arm, and the contact again became light and slippery.

In conclusion, I have no objection to psionic research. The more the merrier, even if it only proves that psionic effects do not exist.

Nor do I mind stories about psionics if written in moderation (which they haven't been lately) and if well done. I have written stories about Atlantis, time-travel, and parallel universes though I do not believe in any of them.

But I do object to declarations that psionics has now been safely proved, that psionic effects are "facts" that cannot be gainsaid, and that if you doubt these "facts" you are a benighted old reactionary who would have burnt Galileo and scoffed at Columbus if you had a chance. It hasn't, they aren't, and you're not.



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when gabriel

by...JOHN BRUNNER

It was an earthy smell, but there was a sickly sweetish edge to ... He was trying to sort it out from the air.

IT all began when we were walking down one of the streets around Marble Arch—Louie Ditton, my clarinetist, and me, on our way to play a date at Nick's Cellar.

We were having a sort of non-conversation, if you follow me; now and then he'd heave a sigh, and I'd go sort of uh-uh. Then it'd be my turn to sigh first.

It was a wet, cold and altogether miserable night. The rain was dripping off my trumpet-case, and Louie's beard was all stringy and rat-tailed. Normally that would have driven him up the wall, but in our state neither of us cared.

We were rounding a corner when the guy appeared.

Louie went into a sort of ice-skating act without the ice—he likes to wear creepers on a band date, and on the wet surface his feet slipped and skidded like they belonged to two separate jivers. Me, I was on the outside of the pavement, but I almost fell over too, what with the shock of finding this guy there in front of us.

Only a few years ago, John Brunner writes, "the old London Jazz Club, now defunct, did meet in a basement that had formerly been a crypt, and in the location indicated in the story—". As at Nick's Cellar, those must have been disturbing quarters to meet in, particularly those times when you had the feeling THEY were listening in the shadows—and waiting.

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He must have been doing a dead run, as a start, to come charging into us like that, but I hadn't heard any footsteps. There was only traffic noise in the distance and not all that much of that because of the weather. Anyway, he ran into us, and when we sorted ourselves out I got a good look at him.

He wore a black evening coat and a black soft hat and evening dress trousers and patent leather shoes—pretty routine. But I took that in passing. His face was what bothered me. It was sharp-featured and—

Well, it was sort of *sly*, if you get me. Not that he was shifty, or anything like that. Just that I felt he was the kind of guy I'd trust exactly as far as I could throw a piano. He had black eyes—very bright and excited. And he carried a brown paper parcel under his arm.

All that happened as fast as one bar of *Tiger Rag* at a real frantic tempo. I grabbed Louie's arm before he really went sprawling and said indignantly to the guy why didn't he watch where the hell he was going?

That made him laugh, for some reason, and I didn't like his laugh any better than I liked his face. He said he was in a hurry.

I could see *that*, I told him, he ought to be more careful. Okay, forget it anyway no harm done.

And I started to walk on past. Louie gave the guy a hurt look and started to do the same. But he called out to us to wait a moment, and I turned back.

You're a trumpet player, the guy told me. I said yes, I was, and why?

Then take this, he said. And he whipped the parcel out from under his arm and shoved it at me. I grabbed it without thinking, and the guy spun around and went on running. He turned the corner so fast he almost blew his hat off with his hurry.

I yelled at him to wait and started after him to ask what the hell he thought he was doing. But when I got far enough to see round the corner, there wasn't a sign of him. He could have walked into the air.

Dig that character! Louie said. That's the sort of guy you say *crazy, man,* to—and really mean it. Had I noticed when his hat nearly fell off? I said I had.

Weird way he wore his hair! said Louie. Kind of twisted up at the sides. Almost like a pair of horns.

I shrugged that one off, looking down at the parcel he had stuffed into my hand. I was just beginning to make out that the feel of the solid thing under the paper was sort of familiar.

Louie looked at it and said what could it be? I think I

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know, I said. I put my case down on the ground and tore off the sodden paper.

Man! I said to Louie in a reverent tone of voice. Will you dig—that—horn!

Right there in my hand lay the most beautiful trumpet I had ever seen.

It shone under the street lamps as if it was glowing. When a drop of rain fell on the metal it lit up like a yellow jewel. I tried the valve action, and the springs responded with a life of their own. The tops of the valves were set with mother-of-pearl which changed colour like a metal rainbow, and it had a wide mouthpiece which felt almost cushiony when I put my finger to it.

We stood there and admired it for a couple of minutes before we could say a word.

Finally I dug for my voice somewhere in my throat, which had gone dry with awe. I said I didn't know where the guy ever got hold of a horn like that one, but it was a cinch only one thing could have made him get rid of it.

The fact that he was nuts, Louie suggested.

I told him no. The horn must be hot. Stolen.

Louie agreed after a while that I was most likely right. He sounded as glum as a square at a jazz record session.

Regretfully, I packed the paper round the beautiful trumpet again and picked up my own battered instrument. I told Louie to come along because we would be late at Nick's.

NICK'S Cellar is one of the weirder locations for a jazz club. I've played at sessions in all kinds of places, from a gymnasium to an art gallery, and even in an embassy once, but Nick's has the lot beaten hollow.

It's a crypt.

Seems there used to be a church over it, but that stopped one or maybe more in the blitz, and for some reason they decided not to rebuild it. Now it's under a bunch of offices, which are naturally empty Saturday nights, and Nick Barelli—one of the brighter of the band agents—rents it for a clubroom.

It's ideal, of course. Plenty of room for a cat to swing is the way I usually put it. There's a big dance floor, and a soft drinks bar in one corner, and for the unenergetic types about two hundred chairs. The bandstand's a sizeable one, as well, which means you don't keep falling over the fans who can't hear more than two feet from your horn. I like it. That is, I *did*.

Well, we got there, and we turned out to be three minutes late, not that that really worried anyone. The rest of the band was already there. Bill Sandler on piano was warming up with a little boo-

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gie and keeping the customers happy, and Fats Hamilton, our West Indian drummer, was lighting his cigar—he never smokes the things except on the stand, when he says if he lights a cigarette he has to put it down and then when the number's over it's a stub.

I went around back with Louie and said hullo to Nick, and Louie did a bit more than *say* hullo to his girl friend Cindy, who was waiting for him. I took the beautiful horn out of the wet paper and stashed it in my case in place of my own and did a few runs to warm up and feel my lip.

It was a terrible temptation to use the other one, natch—but you can't go out on the stand with a horn you've never touched in your life. I was used to my old one, and I reckoned I'd better stick with it.

Then I went out front and called the boys to order and got the session under way.

The place was so packed by the time we broke for the interval, you'd have sworn they were about due to run out of breathing air. Not on your life. More of them turned up. It was a fine session; they were r e s p o n s i v e. There's something about a good audience which does things to a jazzman—there's a two-way trade in appreciation which improves the music. I mean a *good* audience, of course—not one which screams for drum solos and piccolo music from the trumpeter.

Anyway. When we went off for the break, I remembered about the horn the guy had given me, and fetched it out for the rest of the boys to look at. They were as puzzled as I was, and I had to tear Louie away from Cindy for two minutes and witness that my story was Bible—true before anyone would believe the guy was fool enough to give an instrument like that to a perfect stranger.

I showed it to Nick Barelli, too, and asked him if there was any news along Archer Street of a horn like this having been pinched. He looked it over lovingly and said no, if anyone had lost it he hadn't heard, but he didn't think anyone could lose it without immediately raising Cain. I sort of signified agreement; there was something that stank about the whole business. Especially when I hunted for the maker's name and serial number. There wasn't one—and even on a custom-built model there should have been.

WELL, it wasn't really my worry. I was feeling pretty good when half ten rolled around—that's closing time at Nick's. The band had played well, I'd made no clinkers—sour notes—and the customers were happy. They yelled for *The Saints*, naturally, to wind up with—it's the traditional climax to the session,

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and I'd hate to figure out how many hundred times I've played it, but I reckoned we might as well give it to them.

So Fats turned to his snares and went prrumph! prrrumph! pererererer*umph!* —and we were off. One of my sins is to let Alf Reardon, our trombonist, take the vocal on the last number—he's the only guy who thinks he can sing. But it has one advantage—it makes the audience leave faster.

Of course, there was the usual backwash of fans who hung around the stand, but that was normal—friends of the band, amateur musicians I'd met a few times, that sort of thing. I signed a couple of autographs for some schoolkids and got rid of them, while Louie took a solo, and told the boys nice work.

Alf knows more verses of that number than anyone else I've ever met; he'd just got to the one which runs:

When Gabriel blows
His golden horn—
Well when Gabriel blows
his horn...

That gave me an idea. I reckoned I might as well make some use of that wonderful trumpet while I had it—I was going to turn it over to the police in the morning, of course. So I went to my case and got it. Every time I looked at it it seemed better.

When I put it to my mouth to blow through it and warm it up, it felt almost like the darned horn was kissing me—as if it actually *wanted* to be played. And when I worked the valves, they seemed to move all the way home at the lightest touch.

Nick was out in the body of the hall, turning out the lights. I told Alf he could quit scaring the audience away, and while Bill rounded out the chorus on piano, I tried over a few notes on the horn to see was it in tune, bending over with my hand round the bell to keep it quiet.

I didn't need to touch the tuning slides at all.

Alf said how about jamming a bit, and the rest of the boys agreed, saying they weren't tired—quite often when the audience leaves a club, the band stays behind and fools around because jazz is fun to play as well as to listen to. So I said if we were *going to stick around*, we might as well finish this one properly, and I put up the horn and started to blow out.

Fats' big mouth fell open and his cigar went rolling on the floor. He didn't notice. Me, I was amazed enough myself! As for the people listening, they were drooling. I heard Cindy yell, What's come over you? and the boys' faces were all lit up with excitement.

I couldn't have answered that. What was happening reminded me of a description I'd read of what it feels like

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to play after taking marijuana —as if all the notes were there already in the horn, stacked up in the right order, and you just had to breathe to get them out. I wasn't playing that horn—it was playing me.

Only this wasn't from muggles. That only makes you think you're good. I *knew* this was good—I could hear the delighted yells from behind me, and even Nick, a hard-boiled case if ever there was one, had come and perched on the side of the stand to listen. Every note I thought of came out of the horn just shaped right: smooth as silk, with a big fat tone and perfectly timed.

I'd never had any illusions about the band—the boys were all pretty good players, of course, or I wouldn't have kept them on—but I knew we weren't class. Now, though—t o n i g h t—we were really swinging, and I was sure it was this horn I held. I was ready to make up my mind to keep it without question, or if it was traced to me to mortgage my house and give the owner anything he wanted—my wife, come to that. Just so I could have his trumpet. I felt I could go on playing for ever; I doubted if my lip would ever get tired.

After a dozen choruses, though, I felt I was kind of monopolising the conversation, and made to break off and someone else solo.

For heaven's sake don't stop! Fats told me prayerfully. I know you can't possibly play like that but I don't want to wake up!

All the boys seemed to think the same way. So I kept at it. This was something I'd dreamed about for years— the kind of music I could always think and never manage to play. And behind me the band was rising to unheard-of heights: Fats was laying down a light, springy, solid beat and Bill's piano and Ed on bass were marching right along with a sort of infectious gaiety; Louie's clarinet was filling in at just the right moments, and even Alf had suddenly acquired a righteous tailgate style, properly syncopated and sliding around like a snake on ice. The parts fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle, and it was good.

I was standing with my back to the dance floor, of course, with Alf and Louie facing each other between me and the rhythm section, not paying any mind to the rest of the room. This was strictly between ourselves. I felt dreamy, far away—almost like being drunk. I noticed Fats' cigar lying on the floor. It had gone out.

After a while, though, even t h r o u g h my preoccupation with what I was—well, call it playing, though it wasn't like any other time I'd blown through here—I began to notice the smell.

It wasn't altogether a pleas-

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ant smell. It was earthy, but there was a sickly, sweetish edge on it, like bad meat, and I saw that Fats had noticed it too—he's sensitive about that sort of thing. He'd cocked his light-brown head on one side as if trying to sort it out from the air.

I cut the volume down and played a few bars pianissimo, and over the music I heard Nick say suddenly, sounding surprised: where did all those guys come from? I locked the door.

All what guys? I turned to look over my shoulder, and saw what he meant. There was a half-seen surge of movement all across the dance floor. The room was in darkness except for the bandstand, but I could make out—must have been a hundred indistinct human shapes.

I had to do a double-take before I really caught on, but someone else was faster—Cindy. She screamed and got to her feet. Fats shouted something hysterical, and made for the door, knocking his stool flying; the rest of the boys took one look and fought with the fans to follow him out of the room.

I stopped blowing in the middle of the note and spun round to find myself looking straight at the nearest of the strangers. I felt everything come to a sudden stop, including my heart.

The guy had no face.

I TRIED to shut my eyes, but I couldn't. I stood there absolutely petrified for maybe a minute, while I tried to persuade myself it wasn't really happening. The whole crowd of them were in rags. They moved with a tired, dragging step, and at every moment, through the holes in their clothes, there showed the whiteness of bare bones.

I gave a sort of nervous chuckle and tried to speak. My first attempt ended in a squeak.

They walked, they talked, them—dry bones!

I don't know how long I'd have stood there with them slowly, purposefully coming towards me, before my nerve finally broke, if the guy hadn't come through the wall.

First, there was a glow, as if the wall was shining; then it got bigger, and I could see the guy behind the light. He stepped out into the room, and it looked like he was clothed in luminous air—as though a bubble of brightness was all round him. The zombies stopped walking towards me.

Then he looked round, and started towards the bandstand. As he moved, the light got brighter. When it touched one of the weird crowd, first the rags and then the bones sort of melted away like mist. The smell dwindled until when the light round the stranger reached the stand there was nothing left.

I stood there foolishly with

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the horn in my hand. The stranger looked at me and smiled. I cleared my throat.

How—how did you let it get away? I asked him.

It was taken by a Person you may have heard of, he told me, still smiling. It amuses him to interfere.

He put out his hand, and I remembered I still held the trumpet. Regretfully, but not really much wanting to keep it now I knew what it was, I gave it to him.

Don't worry, he said. You'll hear it again—at the proper time.

And he went away.

My knees folded up under me, and I sat down on the edge of the bandstand. There was sweat dripping off my face when I really began to take in what I'd done. And I'd played it in a crypt, of all places—where **people had** been buried all around me!

I slowly realised that Louie was calling me through the door. He stuck his head in, made sure the room was empty, and then came running across the stand. He asked was I all right, and I told him sure I was.

What happened to the horn, he wanted to know.

I said I'd given it back to its owner, the greatest trumpeter of them all.

Who's that? said Louie, puzzled. Have I ever heard the guy?

No, I told him. He's never blown the horn. But when he does—man, *then* you'll hear music.

I got up and collected my own trumpet, and went out across the floor humming the tune of *The Saints*. After a while I started to sing the words to it.

When Gabriel blows
His golden horn—

STRANGE EARTHLING

I remember my first day in school and the way I felt when I first saw an earthman's child.

Glub! By Crom, he was an ugly thing! He had only four extensions, two which he used to hold on to things—including my school wig, when we were fighting, and two more, partly covered by some foreign substance, which he used to propel himself about the school grounds.

The poor child only had two eyes. I suspect we were all rather cruel, the way we crowded around him, our searchers quivering as we tried to find the third eye, but he was after all the first two-eyed alien we had ever seen. The youngest one among us, my cousin Ctwwl, summed it up though when he flowed over to the boy, quivering with excitement, giggling at him and at all of us his shocked delight at the boy's strange looks, and the rest of us, a warmly rich green in color, murmured our sympathy...

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alterations as usual

by . . . MILDRED McCUNE

He couldn't stand it any more. "You've got to tell me! What is it?", he rasped. What could have happened?

The third world war (a six hour affair) didn't finish off civilization after all. Somebody bungled and there were hundreds of people still living, mostly in the middle west.

Oddly, every survivor was a red head. There was a lot of idle speculation about this at first, but they all went bald so soon they dropped the subject.

Twelve years after the debacle, life went on as usual in most ways. Take the Engels as an average example. A youngish, shiny-headed couple, they married soon after the holocaust and moved from their respective homes to a small Arkansas farm in the same county with several other families. A deep well supplied fresh water, a six legged cow produced milk, apricots grew the size of grapefruit and peaches grew the size of cherries.

Given time they produced three bald daughters: Martha, Linda, and Monica now aged eleven, eight, and three. The school system was adequate, but scattered, arithmetic for instance being taught in Kansas City, reading and english

The decades after the debacle were strange and frightening years. Life went on as usual—children continued to be children except for a disturbing tendency to teleport before breakfast, to forget to fold their wings when inside the house, etc.; then things began to happen . . . . .

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skills in Sioux City, and science courses in Little Rock; but it was all broadcast for the stay at homes, and there was a fifteen minute break between classes for the teleports (which included Martha and Linda) in case they had to stop by home for books or to accomodate their clothing to a change in weather.

Bob Engel sat this particular evening reading an old science fiction magazine (sadly, not one S.F. writer still existed) about the survivors of the atom age. "This fellow sure hit it on the head", he remarked to his wife, Ann. "Teleports—two-headed kids —mind readers—" He threw the magazine down. "What a mess!"

"Oh Bob", Ann protested. "It's not that bad. It's exciting! Just think if I could travel around like Linda and Martha do every time I felt in the mood!"

"I like you just the way you are", Bob answered firmly. "Home."

"But it would be such fun to shop for my own wigs. Did you see the one Linda bought me for Mother's Day from Omana? A man's gray toupee with a mustache to match. And she thinks it's beautiful. One of these days I have to wear it. Imagine", she went on, "being able to read minds, or just any little unusual accomplishment."

"Oh we'll all be psi-copathic before we're through", Bob said. He waited a moment. "Get it? Spelled with a p-s-i."

"I never could spell", Ann answered absently, then brightened. "See what I mean? If I could read your mind you wouldn't have to explain anything. I'd just know!"

But Bob was gloomily immersed in his magazine. For a time Ann crocheted, then set her work down and stepped to the door. "Monica", she called. "Time for bed."

"What's she doing out there by herself?" Bob inquired.

"Playing with the pigeons, as usual." Ann went to the kitchen to warm a glass of milk for a bedtime snack and winced as she heard the familiar bang and clatter of falling objects in the living room.

"Monica", Bob roared. "How many times have I told you. In the house FOLD YOUR WINGS!"

I wonder, Ann mused—not for the first time—why God saved the red heads.

The following day went off unusually well. The older girls walked to the breakfast table, and on time, and remembered not to teleport off during the meal for any reason. Monica didn't flap her wings because she objected to her cereal. Linda only returned twice before first class in Kansas City for things she had forgotten and once more to kiss Ann good-bye.

Of course Monica flew up

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to the roof when it was nap time and Ann had to lure her down with cookies, but Monica got such a thrill out of her daily game Ann couldn't scold her. After school the older girls played hide and seek with a few friends in Denver and came home late drenched from a sudden cloudburst.

They were upset.

"Trouble, girls?" said Ann.

"She cheats", Linda said. "That Agnes cheats. She knows where I hide every time cause she reads my mind."

"And she pretends she doesn't", protested Martha. "I was way up high in a hollow tree, and she didn't even look; just came straight for me." They changed to dry clothes and simmered down a bit before coming to dinner.

"Boy, I wish I could read minds", said Martha. "Then I wouldn't always have to ask Betty if Bill still likes me better than Alice." Her eyes grew round. "Some of the things Betty tells me. Wow!"

Ann motioned Bob over to the sink. "Hear that?" she murmured. "Do you think it's time to have a little talk with her?"

Bob ran his hand through his dark brown toupee before answering shortly. "You know all you need to." He seated himself. "Girls", he said "your mother and I have been thinking it over for some time, and we've decided to join one of the colonies in the big cities. We grew up in a different world from yours, you know, and sometimes we get lonesome for the plain old dull folks who take an hour to walk a few miles and still have to depend on conversation for an exchange of ideas."

"Leave the farm?" cried the girls together. "Oh—Dad!"

"Monica's getting older," he continued, "and needs some feathered friends to play with before she decides to join the wild ducks."

The idea was beginning to take root. "Gee, it will be fun", Martha said. "Kids around all the time. Boys too. Can we invite them over for meals and things?"

"Only if they walk in and walk out." Bob answered sternly. "And no telepaths allowed."

"Yeah, they spoil everything", Linda agreed.

"Mrs. Coates is going to stay here with you for a couple of weeks", Ann said, "and we're going to look over the colonies before we decide where to settle. All right, girls? Think you can behave yourselves and help with Monica?"

"Sure Mom", the chorused.

After the children were tucked in for the night, Bob turned on the nine thirty news —the only program of the day, outside of the educational series.

The hydroponics plants

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were furnishing adequate fresh produce in all the colonies and outlanders were urged to join the groups and pool their knowledge for the best good of all. Community dances were being held weekly in all settled sections. The medical school in Little Rock under the tutelage of old Dr. Adams had conducted graduation exercises and four promising young men were now accredited to practice medicine. Parents were warned to keep closer check on their teleporting children because of the usual spring rash of class cutting.

"And don't forget", adlibbed the newscaster for the thousandth time, before Ann could switch him off, "Do your duty by posterity—tonight!"

"Ugh!" said Ann.

"Oh I don't know", said Bob fatuously. "No man rests so easy as he who has done his duty. Shall we turn in and get an early start in the morning?"

"Do you suppose Mrs. Coates can manage Monica?" Ann worried, when they had lurched and skidded some five hours on overgrown, rock covered highways.

"Now don't go worrying about the kids. This is supposed to be in the nature of a second honeymoon."

"Oh Bob! That's sweet! I won't say another word. Do you suppose Monica will come down from the roof for her nap?" Ann glanced again at her watch. "It's past time now."

"That kid knows who she has under her thumb. Mrs. Coates will do all right."

Ann suffered through another hundred miles and five hours before they both agreed to stop for the night in the next good sized town. They picked a small modern home and swept down one of the bedrooms before dark to render it sleepable. The front porch was a perfect spot for their cold dinner. They sat silent afterwards as the dusk settled softly about them. Bob cradled his arm around Ann's shoulder. A full yellow moon peeped from behind the mountain and Bob's arm tightened around Ann.

"Isn't it romantic?" she said shakily. "Oh I wish we'd brought the baby!"

Bob dropped his arm. "Somehow", he remarked, "I feel I'm not registering."

She caught his hand. "Oh you are!" she protested. "It's just I'm so lonesome."

"Thanks", he barked, but in a minute his arm stole back around her shoulder. "You'll feel better in the morning", he said.

In the morning they woke to find two solemn faces peering into theirs. Ann jerked up in bed. "Martha! Linda!" she cried "What's happened? What's wrong?"

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"Its Monica", Martha said slowly. "She disappeared."

"Flew the coop", burst out Linda.

"When?" Bob shouted at Martha.

"Yesterday—Nap time. Mrs. Coates got her in and lay down to rest herself and fell asleep. Then she saw the bed empty and she called and checked the whole farm and got the Swenson's' out looking and the Saegers. Wasn't anywhere. Then when we came home from school we searched and got all the kids we could to help and not a trace."

"Did you look in the trees?" Ann asked. "And on the roofs?"

"Everywhere," Linda said soberly.

"Home", Bob said. "We'll start right now. You girls get right to the broadcasting station and have them put out the alarm. Then go home and keep looking."

There was a rattle at the window, and dimly through the dirt smeared glass a round, cherubic face was framed.

"Monica!" they all cried, and rushed to open the window. Monica folded her wings flat to her night gown and hopped to the floor. "Heh-wo Mama. Heh-wo Daddy", she crooned. She pointed to her cheek. "Tiss?"

Ann gathered her up and smothered her with kisses. "How did you ever find us?"

Monica struggled free. "I heared you finking was me in bed, and yes! me was in bed, so me comed tell you."

"Oh you idiot child", Ann murmured. "How did you know where we were?"

"You fink—me know. You not fink—me go sleep."

Ann's eyes were damp. She turned to Bob. "So now we have a telepath."

"I'll test", Bob said. "Monica, what am I fink—thinking?"

"Mama", she screeched, running for cover.

Bob rubbed his jaw. "Yep", he said slowly. "We've got one. And I just went off duty. She's the last of the Engels."

"What Daddy mean?" asked Monica.

"He means", said Martha, with a superior air, "you're the last child in this family. No more babies."

"Den what's dat?" said Monica, pointing an accusing finger at Ann's middle.

"Wh-what?" Ann asked.

"Dat!' Monica repeated. "Dat baby!"

"X-ray eyes", Ann gasped, in shocked belief. She glanced at the three puzzled faces and focused on Bob's. "I meant to tell you just as soon as we settled in the City. I didn't want anything to hold us back. Honestly, it's been the toughest four months keeping the secret."

Martha and Linda did an impromtu dance and Bob couldn't quite help expanding

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a bit. "Did it again", he said smugly. "And you wonder why God saved the redheads!"

Monica was peering closer at Ann. She pointed. "I like dis head da best."

"Twins?" Ann cried. "How many heads?"

"One—two", Monica counted.

"Bob spoke levelly. "How many feet?"

"One—two—free—eight—nine—twelbe."

"How many?" said Bob, on a rising note.

"Six", said Monica confidently, "and dere's funny tings tickin' outa' dere heads."

"Antenna?" Ann gasped.

"Sure", agreed Monica.

"I think I know where we're going to settle", said Bob. "Little Rock. Across the street from the medical school."

The following months dragged like years, in spite of the hearty welcome and affability of their new friends in Little Rock. Bob and Ann had a tacit agreement to not ask Monica one more question; but secretly and with cunning each tried to draw on the information Monica so willingly proferred.

Ann kept her silence but went to bed for a week when she discovered one of the heads didn't have any eyes—a point Monica corrected when that head woke up one day.

Bob walked the deserted sections of town for hours when he gathered the antenna were, in actuality, horns. (broken old rusty ones)

Thanks to Martha and Linda the entire community waited tautly for the day of delivery and the subject of mercy deaths was discussed solemnly in closed circles.

The day came. All four new doctors were in attendance, headed by old Dr. Adams himself. Sympathetic townspeople overflowed the waiting room and the hall, and Bob escaped into the delivery room. He stood by sweating while doctors donned snowy caps and gowns and scrubbed nurses helped tie masks around their faces.

Ann sank deeper into sleep. Instruments were checked. Nurses stood at attention. The four assistants took positions flanking the table and Dr. Adams let the overhead light gleam a moment on the knife before he lowered it steadily to make the careful incision. Bob picked his spot and fainted.

Dimly, as he returned to consciousness, he saw the group huddled about a smaller table. "Amazing", said Dr. Adams. "Unbelievable!"

"Wh-what?" croaked Bob from the floor.

Dr. Adams glanced briefly toward the door and turned back. "Five minutes ago I would have said IMPOSSIBLE."

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The young interne's voice was respectful. "Would you say, sir, that these are throwbacks?"

"You've got to tell me", Bob rasped, raising himself to his elbows. "What is it?"

Dr. Adams looked around in annoyance and located the voice. "Oh—it's you!" he said. "It's something I never expected to see again." He took off his glasses and wiped them. "Hair, my boy. Red hair. Thatches of it."

Bob stumbled to his feet and pushed an interne aside. "Two little boys. Aren't they beautiful?"

The Engles were the pride of all Little Rock and were interviewed on the radio several times. Their happiness grew with each succeeding month as it became increasingly apparent the twins would never be teleports. They crawled; then they took their time learning to totter about the house and yard, and Ann always knew just where to find them. The four foot fence made a staunch corral.

When they were three they each received a shiny new tricycle, and it was a wonderful surprise because they weren't telepaths.

Their thick, carrot red hair fell long to the shoulders, and even the girls agreed they had only one fault. Tease them and those little beaks could really peck!

LOST TRAVELER

Tom Harris came running over to my General Store that morning, all excited about the strange thing from the sky that had just settled down on the Village Green. I was busy taking care of Widow Perkins just then—she was getting things for the Tea the Ladies Aid was to have the next day—so at first I wasn't paying much attention (Tom is always getting excited) and then it sunk in. Widow Perkins says my mouth was wide open and that I kept pouring sugar into the two pound bag long after I should have stopped. Widow Perkins!

I ran over to the Green of course. Mayor Stubbs was there. Banker Jefferson was there. And all the kids from the school were there of course—shouting to each other—all excited—getting as close as they dared to the glowing thing we all realized was one of them Flying Saucers the papers were always talking about.

All of a sudden there's a noise like a click, and out of an opening steps a little man, three feet tall, dressed like you and me. He walks over to where we're all standing, and—may because I'm a little more dignified looking than the Mayor—turns to me. "Please Sir," he says in a shrill voice, "I'm lost. Which way to Broadway?"

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25 words or less

by...HENRY SLESAR

We're going to make merchandising history with this. If the "Trip to Mars" Contest doesn't sell 5 million boxes.

EXCITEMENT! It whipped like an electric charge through the offices of Fulsom, Krew, and Longham. It crackled through the fingertips of the copy typist as they hammered out the closing words of the Snappies Contest Plan. It swirled around the busy hands of Clancy, the mail-room supervisor, as he tied the last expert knot on the package of pastel layouts. But it reached full intensity in the frenetic movements of Eldon Clark, Vice-President and Account Executive, as he patroled the activities of the agency people preparing him for his client.

"Here's the Plans Book, Mr. Clark!" said Miss Ferrar, placing the document in his eager hand.

"Here's the layouts, Mr. Clark!" said Clancy.

"Knock 'em dead, Eddie!" said Lou Fulsom, the agency president.

They waved him into the elevator, and after an anxious half-hour in midtown traffic, the advertising man walked confidently into the Presiden-

Henry Slesar, young New York advertising executive, returns with this story of the fabulous Snappies Contest. NAME THE MARTIAN PUPPY AND TRAVEL TO THE STARS IN THE SPACESHIP POLARIS! Fabulous! Fabulous! But what the promoters do not consider is the plans of the innocent little Martian puppy—so harmless . . .

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tial Suite of the Dixie Cereal Company.

"Here it is, Mr. Pfeifer," he said, hurriedly undoing Clancy's good work. "The most terrific contest idea in the history of the cereal business!"

"Let's see it, let's see it!" said Mr. Pfeifer, leaning forward with boyish enthusiasm. He helped Clark rip off the brown paper that concealed the dramatic announcement ads. Finally, before the account man could make a formal presentation, the president snatched the topmost layout and scanned the lettered headlines.

"'KIDS! KIDS! KIDS!'" he read with feeling. "'WIN A FREE TRIP TO MARS! NAME THE MARTIAN PUPPY AND TRAVEL TO THE STARS IN THE SPACESHIP *POLARIS!*'" He looked up at Clark. "Genius," he whispered, almost reverently. "It's a stroke of pure genius."

Clark looked modest. "Would you like to see the copy?"

"Copy? Yes, please." He took the white paper from the account man's hand and whipped out a pair of dark-rimmed spectacles. He looked over their rims before he began to read, and said: "This travel-to-the-stars business. Is that all right? I mean, Mars is a planet, not a star."

"License," said Clark smoothly. "Just license, Mr. Pfeifer."

Pfeifer nodded and turned to the typewritten words. With TV-announcer glibness, he read them aloud.

"'How would you like to step inside a *real spaceship?* How would you like to blast off from Earth at *25,000 miles per hour?* How would you like to step out on the red soil of the *mysterious planet Mars?* It can happen to you—just by naming this cute little Martian puppy!'" Pfeifer turned to the layout again and focused his eyes on the illustration of the cute little Martian puppy. He looked a bit dubious, probably because the "puppy" looked more like an owl set preposterously on four legs. But remembering what Clark had said about "license" he returned to the exciting challenge on the paper in his hand.

"'Yes, now Snappies—the whole-wheat cereal with the rocket-engine energy built right in—makes it possible for *you* to visit outer space! As you know, only scientists, technicians, and other important grown-ups have had this thrilling opportunity up to now. But *you* can be the first kid in the whole wide world to make this fabulous journey!'"

Respect for this thinking shone beacon-like in Pfeifer's

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face. "We'll turn 'em upside down," he said, his voice trembling with anticipation of the flood of boxtops. "We'll have kids eating Snappies for breakfast, lunch, and dinner!"

"Read the rest of it, Mr. Pfeifer," said Clark easily, in the relaxed manner of a man who recognizes a triumph.

The president read on. His voice mounted with fervor as the words ticked off the glories of a trip to Mars. He gloated over phrases like "Mars gavity is so light, you can practically *fly!*" And—"Imagine! Your own special space suit! Your own helmet! Your own oxygen tank!" He licked his lips over the contest rules, which asked for a statement about "Why I Love Snappies" (in case of a tie, the rules explained) and required three Snappies boxtops with every entry ("send in as many as you like!"). At last, he put the paper down and took off his glasses with a sigh.

"Eldon," he said gravely. "We're going to make merchandising history with this. If the 'Trip to Mars' contest doesn't sell five billion boxes of Snappies, I'll eat the damned stuff myself."

"Sales are our job," said Clark proudly. "And don't give another thought to the mechanics of this operation, Mr. Pfeifer. We did some spitballing with the Interplanetary Travel Company last week, and I give you my personal guarantee that they'll cooperate one hundred percent."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Pfeifer.

"Now," said the account executive, opening his briefcase and getting down to the short strokes, "here's the first rough thinking on print media schedules and TV spots. Of course, we'll feature the contest on all our regular shows, but we believe you need extra coverage as well. Now, Plan A calls for an increase in appropriation of about roughly three million, but we can kick that one around a bit—"

"I'm all for an increase," said the president forcefully. "This is big, Eldon, *big!* I want to shoot the works on it, understand? I want to spread the word all over America. I want every kid with a mouth to hear about this Trip to Mars. Do you get my meaning?"

"Yes, *sir!*" said Clark. He rapidly calculated the agency commission on the increased budget, and grinned with pleasure. "We'll start the ball rolling right away!"

Back at the offices of Fulsom, Krew, and Longham, Eldon Clark accepted the congratulations of the staff with becoming diffidence. He thanked them all for their ef-

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forts, and even remembered to say a kind word to the copywriter who had contributed the "Trip to Mars" idea.

If Major Phil Boardman hadn't been the star graduate of the Astronautical School of Kansas, he might have been more lenient in his view of the Snappies proposal. As it was, the pilot's reaction was almost offensively rude to the top management of the Interplanetary Travel Company, and it took some fancy conciliatory work on their part to get him to grudgingly agree. Money, of course, was their argument in favor of the scheme; the company would earn three times as much on this one trip to the partially-colonized planet as they would in ferrying another handful of stoop-shouldered scientists, raw-boned mining engineers, and round-bellied dignitaries.

"Okay," said Boardman, tight-lipped. "I'll fly some snotnosed kid to Mars. But I don't have to also take that walking hoot-owl in the bargain."

Spencer, the I.T. public relations man, spread his hands. "Aw, Phil," he said coaxingly. "What's the difference? It's a harmless little creature."

"Harmless or not," said Boardman. "Those things give me the creeps. They're bad luck on a ship."

"Oh, come off it, Phil. It didn't jinx the pilot who brought it to Earth."

"Well, I still don't like the idea." The pilot slumped in his chair. "We thought they were cute little buggers when we first saw them, too. They were friendly, all right, like love-starved pups. Then they got to be downright annoying. Always following us, slobbering around, begging for affection—you can take just so much of that—"

"They sound like good pets," offered the p.r. man.

"Maybe for kids," the pilot shrugged. "Me—I hate them. But I guess I can't do anything about it. Company wants, company gets." He picked up a photoprint of the first contest announcement ad. He glanced over it with disdain. "Goddam kids will eat this up," he predicted.

"And how," said Spencer. "I've got a hell of a time with my own kids. I told them they can't answer because I'm an employee of a cooperating company, but they don't seem to care. They got a list of names as long as your arm. Some of 'em pretty cute, too. Hey, how do you like these—" He reached into his coat and produced a folded paper. "*Hootiepup*. How do you like that? Or *Marzipan*. Get it? *Marzi*—"

"I get it, I get it," said Boardman disgustedly. He slammed out of the room.

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Captain Destiny flattened himself against a bulkhead, heat-gun at the ready, watching Korgo, the evil Prince of Saturn, prepare to blast away from the prison asteroid. Jaw set grimly, he stepped forward and said:

"Hands up, Korgo! I got you covered!"

Korgo merely smiled. "So?" he said in a sibilant, oriental voice. "And what makes you think you can stop me, Captain Destiny?"

"This!" said the Captain, thrusting forth the heat-gun. But before he could fire, Korgo turned his hypnotic eyes on the Captain, and Destiny crumpled to the floor.

"H e h - h e h - h e h - heh!" laughed Korgo, towering over the defeated law-man. "Now we'll see who stays behind, Captain Destiny!"

The evil prince took the heat-gun from the lifeless fingers, pointed it at Captain Destiny's head, and the scene faded out.

With a s i g h, Clarence Gracey reached for the dial of the television set, to blank out the inevitable approach of the Dancing Snappies. But there was s o m e t h i n g different about today's commercial, and it stopped his hand in mid-air. He watched in open-mouthed fascination as a film clip of an owl-like creature, with reddish-brown fur and four tiny feet, appeared on the screen.

"Hey, kids!" said the announcer. "Here's the most exciting news you've heard in your *whole life!* If you can think up a swell name for this little Martian puppy, you can win a *free trip to the planet Mars!*"

Clarence's eyes bugged. The announcer was right. In all his nine years, he had never heard such an exciting offer!

He absorbed every word of the announcement, his interest rising to fever pitch with each succeeding statement about the fantastic contest sponsored by the cereal company. A trip to Mars! A ride in a spaceship! A space suit all his own! Talk about your wonderlands, your Alladin's amp, your wishing rings! Here was a dream come true!

"So don't forget, kids!" the announcer concluded. "Get your *free* entry blank today! Send in all the names you like —just make sure your entries are accompanied by three boxtops from packages of Snappies—t h e whole-wheat cereal with the rocket-engine energy built right in!"

There was some talk about other prizes, too; insignificant awards like cash and automobiles. But only the First Prize brought the look of shiny-eyed dedication to Clarence Gracey's round young face. Solemnly, he swore him-

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self to an ascetic existence whose only purpose would be the attainment of this wondrous goal. Carefully, with instinctive cunning, he planned his campaign. The first objective was in the kitchen: a woman with flour on her hands and whisp of hair curled around her eyeglass hook. She was Target One; she was also his mother.

"Snappies?" said Mrs. Gracey in surprise at her son's request. "I thought you didn't like them?"

"Oh, I *do*, Mommy, I do!" said Clarence devoutly. "I *love* Snappies. I could eat *millions* of 'em!"

"Well," the woman said doubtfully. "I suppose I could pick you up a box tomorrow—"

"No, no, Mommy!" said Clarence, hopping up and down. "Get lotsa boxes, lotsa boxes!"

"Clarence, you can only eat one at a time—"

"No, no!" he said. "Get lotsa boxes!" He was on the verge of a tantrum, and Mrs. Gracey didn't relish the prospect.

"All right, all right," she grumbled. "We'll see how much you like them."

Clarence, smiling secretly to himself, returned to the living room. That took care of Target One. Now came the next step. He needed a name.

In the photographic studios of Fulsom, Krew, and Longham, the Snappies account executive rubbed his hands together joyfully as the visireel cameras clicked merrily.

The owl-like "puppy" was cooperative. At least, it stayed at attenion before the lenses, and snuggled up cosily against the chest of the actor who played Captain Destiny.

"How about you, Eddie?" said the photographer. "You hold the pup this time. Good publicity pic for the trade press."

"Sure, why not," said Eldon Clark. "How about you, Major Boardman?" He turned to the pilot, who was watching the poceedings sourly. "Want to get into this one?"

"No, thanks."

"Camera-shy, Major?" grinned Lou Fulsom.

"Major Boardman doesn't care for the pup," said Spencer, the public relations man. "Spacemen aren't crazy about the beasts, you know." He tried to soften the explanation with a smile.

"They're friendly all right," said Mr. Pfeifer, jovially.

"And they really love kids," said Lou Fulsom. "This one does, anyway. My little nephew was here this morning, and it was all we could do to keep the pup from running after him."

"Maybe we should give the pup to the child who wins," said Mr. Pfeifer musingly.

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"Be a chance for a little more publicity."

"Excellent idea, Mr. Pfeifer!" said Fulsom.

"We ought to have the winner pretty soon," said the account man. "Contest closes in another week. We ought to get a lot of press notice out of the award ceremonies."

"Publicity!" snapped Major Boardman. "Press notices!" He snorted. "What do you think a trip to Mars is? A ride on a carousel?"

"Easy, Major," Spencer's smile was uncertain.

"Did you people ever stop and think about what you're really doing?" The pilot was glowering now. "Making a carnival out of space travel—a gimmick for some lousy merchandising stunt—"

Lou Fulsom bristled. "Now, see here, Major—"

"Do you know how many guys were killed getting to Mars? Do you know how many colonists have died up there? Did you ever hear of space-burn? Space-blindness? Do you know what a meteor strike can do to a man's lungs?"

"Come off it, Phil!" the p.r. man warned.

"A spaceship with every boxtop!" Boardman sneered. "Come out and see the Martian zoo. Look at all the funny scientists in their cages. Play with the darling little Martian puppies—"

"You're stepping over the line, Major," said Pfeifer threateningly. "This is a legitimate enterprise, and if you don't like it—"

"If I don't like it *what*, Mr. Pfeifer?" The pilot scowled. "If you want my resignation from this assignment, all you have to do is ask the company. They'll be only too pleased, and so will I!"

"Now, now," said Spencer placatingly. "Nobody's suggesting anything like that. You're the best in the business, Phil, and that's what Mr. Pfeifer and the agency want, isn't that right? After all, there's going to be a *child* aboard—"

"That's right," said Clark cheerfully. "We have to think of that, don't we?"

"Well," said the cereal man, still somewhat ruffled. "I guess you're right. Sorry, Major Boardman."

The pilot grunted. "Skip it," he said. He threw them a sardonic salute, looked over at the owl-like "puppy", and left the studio.

"You have to understand these space people," said Spencer to the others. "Out in the void so much—well, they get kind of edgy. You understand."

"Of course!" said Eldon Clark boisterously. "We understand p e r f e c t l y." He turned to the photographer. "Now how about that picture?"

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One minute, Captain Destiny was grappling with the Tiger Men of Callisto, and the evil Prince of Saturn was about to destroy him by a heat-gun blast from the rear. The next minute, the Captain was smiling pleasantly at the television audience, petting the reddish-brown fur of the little Martian animal on his shoulder.

"Boys and girls," said the Captain, "here's the exciting news you've all been waiting for. The dramatic climax of the contest that all America has been talking about—the Snappies 'Trip to Mars' contest!"

There were statues in the world with more mobility than Clarence Gracey at this moment. His eyes were like flying saucers, and a medical man would have been alarmed at the complete absence of breath and the abnormal heart beat.

"So here it is, boys and girls—the name of our own little Martian puppy—the name that will send some lucky boy or girl on a flying trip in the spaceship *Polaris*. So fasten your G belts, because here it comes—"

Not even the drumroll that followed was louder than Clarence's pulse.

"The name of our Martian puppy is...SNAPPER!"

Across the nation, three hundred and sixty-two boys and girls screamed with delight before three hundred and sixty-two television sets.

"Now," said the Captain, "a lot of you boys and girls sent in this wonderful name for our little Martian pet, so the prize goes to the best statement about 'Why I Love Snappies' in twenty-five words or less..." The Captain raised a white card in front of his face, trying to read it through the glass helmet he wore. "And the winner of the Grand Prize in the Snappies 'Trip to Mars' contest is..."

Three hundred and sixty-two breaths were held, to the anxiety of seven hundred and twenty-four parents.

"...Clarence Gracey, age nine, of Peoria, Illinois!"

It took half an hour to restore Mrs. Gracey to normal health after the announcement, but one look at her son Clarence, and the neighbors knew they could do nothing to restore his equanimity for a long, long time.

Transcript from the New York Times, April 23, 2012:

REPORTER: Mr. Pfeifer, is it true that you plan to accompany the contest winner on the trip to Mars?

MR. PFEIFER: That is correct. I plan to make the journey along with a representative of our agency.

MR. CLARK: That's Fulsom, Krew, and Longham. 880

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Fifth Avenue. Telephone—

REPORTER: Are you the representative, sir?

MR. CLARK: That's right. Eldon Clark. Vice-President and Account Executive on the Dixie Cereal Company account, America's largest producer of—

REPORTER: Tell me, Mr. Pfeifer, do you have any trepidation about space travel?

MR. PFEIFER: Not at all. It is my understanding that space flight is as safe as jets these days. We are also fortunate in having as our pilot the distinguished astronaut, Major Philip Boardman.

SPENCER: Of course, all Interplanetary Travel Company pilots are extremely able, but Major Boardman is particularly—

REPORTER: Are you Major Boardman, sir?

BOARDMAN: Yes.

REPORTER: Major, how many space trips have you made?

BOARDMAN: Fourteen. No, fifteen, counting my trial flight.

CLARK: We have full confidence in Major Boardman's ability, and can assure the parents of Clarence Gracey that every precaution will be taken to safeguard his—to see that the boy has a good, safe journey.

BOARDMAN: Naturally, there is no such thing as guaranteed safety on a space voyage.

REPORTER: What do you mean by that, Major Boardman?

SPENCER: I don't think you understood the Major's statement. He means that a space trip today practically guarantees—

BOARDMAN: No, I didn't. I said there is no guarantee.

PFEIFER: Now, really, Major.

CLARK: I think this interview has lasted long enough, don't you, Mr. Pfeifer?

REPORTER: Just one more moment. That's a provocative statement, Major Boardman. Do you think there is a great deal of risk involved on this flight?

SPENCER: No more than usual, I can assure you.

REPORTER: Pardon me, sir, but I would like the Major to answer this question.

BOARDMAN: More risk than usual, I believe. Under normal circumstances, our passengers are professional people, who can take orders and instructions. The few political passengers we have had have often been difficult. And on this flight, of course, we'll not only have non-professionals aboard, but a child as well—to say nothing of an animal.

CLARK: Major Boardman, this is ridiculous.

REPORTER: Then this increases the danger, in your opinion?

PFEIFER: Really, Major—

BOARDMAN: Definitely.

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There are always unknown factors in space travel, and the safest course to follow is to have known equations aboard your ship. However, I'm fairly confident that everything will work out well.

REPORTER: Thank you, Major Boardman. Thank you very much.

The day arrived.

Captain Destiny was there, and offered his hand solemnly to Clarence Gracey, who accepted it with mature contempt, recognizing the Captain for the pseudo-spaceman he was.

The Peoria Spaceman's Band played twenty rousing choruses of the *Ad Astra Per Ardua March*. The Mayor couldn't attend the ceremony, but the President of the City Council was on hand to present the best wishes of his home town to the young astronaut.

Fifty hand-picked packers from the Dixie Cereal Company made a stunning ensemble in their colorful costumes. A delegation from the advertising agency was there, resplendent in pink seersucker. The Interplanetary Travel Company had gone all out in decorating the field for the momentous occasion.

The business of getting Clarence Gracey into his pint-sized space suit was made a little difficult by the barrage of cameras that were trained on him throughout. Clarence was in a posing mood, and he squirmed about in postures that would have done justice to Captain Destiny himself. Finally, they had him fully outfitted, and ready to be strapped into the special contour seat.

"A great moment, Eldon," said Mr. Pfeifer emotionally. The president was an unimposing figure, even in his space suit. Eldon Clark, however, looked the proper spaceman, even if his rig was a bit more tailored than usual.

"A great moment indeed," said Clark. "Snappies sales are way beyond expectation. And this trip will build permanent good will for the company."

"Wish that pilot was a little friendlier," the president said. "No fun having a grouch aboard on such a trip, eh?"

"I'm sure he'll warm up," said Clark with a smile. He looked over at Clarence, who was fondling his new Martian pet. "They sure make a cute couple, don't they? The puppy and the boy I mean. A real human-interest natural, eh, Mr. Pfeifer?"

"It's heartwarming," said Mr. Pfeifer. "Heartwarming."

"Okay, let's climb in," said Major Boardman.

A great cheer went up from the crowd as the cereal man, the advertising man, pilot, boy, and puppy entered the

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spaceship Polaris, pointing its silvery nose at the heavens.

There was fifteen minutes of tense expectancy, and then the rockets whined and exploded, hoisting the great ship off the ground, and sending it screaming skyward towards its rendezvous with Mars.

"Lucky kid," said Captain Destiny, looking up.

"Come down from there!"

Major Boardman snapped the command at the boy in his most official voice. They had been in space no more than eight hours before Clarence had become jaded by the complexity of equipment aboard and by the views of outer space. Now, for an added thrill, he had removed his magnetic boots and was taking advantage of his weightlessness.

"Whee!" he cried. "I'm flying! Look at me! I'm flying!"

"Come down or I'll whale the tar out of you," the pilot warned.

"Now, now," said Pfeifer. "Boys will be boys, Major. Even in space, you know." He chuckled. Eldon Clark tried to join him with a smile, but the acceleration had upset the account man somewhat more than he expected, and he was content to spend the rest of the trip on his bunk.

"Boys will be broken in half," said the pilot grimly, "if they act that way on *my* ship." He climbed a ladder and reached for the boy, who nimbly floated off and laughed. Boardman said some words that would have shocked Mrs. Gracey.

"Why don't you play with your puppy?" suggested Clark. "You're getting me dizzy, Clarence."

"Don't *wanna* play with my puppy," said the boy. "Ain't a real puppy anyway. It looks more like a *owl,* if you ask me."

"Nobody asked you," said Boardman. "Now get down and stop the clowning or I'll throw you out of the airlock."

Clarence had seen enough television to know the perils of *that* procedure, so he obediently returned to the pilot's level and replaced his boots. "I want a cookie," he said.

"There are no cookies," said the Major.

"How about some Snappies?" said Mr. Pfeifer.

"Snappies?" Clarence made an unusual face. "Boy, I'll never eat any more Snappies in my *whole life.* I'm *sick* of 'em. I been eating Snappies by the *millions.* I *hate* 'em."

Mr. Pfeifer looked perturbed. "You're a very rude little man," he said. "You could show some gratitude, at least."

"Har-har," the boy sang, "penny-for-a-star, hop into your space suit, and there you are!"

"Stop *fidgeting,* damn it!" said Clark from his bunk.

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"Look out the spaceport for a while. Maybe you'll see a meteor or something."

The boy didn't listen. He picked up the Martian animal and cooed to it. "Hello, little Snapper!" he said. "Hello, little stupid fat owl-faced dope." He poked at the creature annoyingly, but it responded with a grateful rub against his hand.

"That's better," said Mr. Pfeifer. "Play with your little pup. He's a cute little fellow, isn't he?"

Encouraged, Clarence raised the pup above his head and divebombed the animal straight at Major Boardman's back.

"Get that goddam thing away from me!" the pilot shouted. "You bring that beast near me and I'll take down your space-pants and tan your hide!"

"Don't you like my little puppy?" the boy asked coyly.

"No!" said the Major. "And I don't like you, either. So keep to yourself or I'll feed you to the Martian cannibals."

"Har, har," said Clarence wisely. "There *ain't* no cannibals on Mars. The only animals are like Snapper. *Everybody* knows that."

"That kid will drive me crazy," Clark groaned. "Can't we shut him up somehow?"

Clarence had started to remove his boots again, and before long, he had floated upwards once more, this time with the little Martian animal clutched to his chest.

"Looka me!" he said. "I'm Captain Destiny, and I've captured Prince Korgo, the evil Prince of Saturn!"

"You're better come down, young man," said Pfeifer. "Major Boardman told you not to do that."

"Let him stay up there," said Clark weakly. "Maybe he'll get stuck or something—"

"I got you now, Prince Krogo!" said the boy, squeezing the puppy around its middle. "Heh-heh-heh! You can't escape Captain Destiny!"

The animal, suddenly frightened, squealed and twisted its way out of Clarence's grasp. Its momentum carried it a few feet away from the boy, and Clarence reached out for it. It was a mistake on his part, for the effort shot him forward before he could grasp a handrail, and the blond head landed against the side of the ship with an unpleasant *thunk!*

The Major rescued both boy and pup, and the pup seemed to be in worse condition. It hopped on the chest of the unconscious youngster almost hysterically. For all the time they took to bring the boy around, they couldn't separate the animal from its owner. When Clarence did come to,

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Snapper looked strangely smug and satisfied.

"He'll be okay," said the pilot, frowning. "Maybe it'll knock some sense into him."

The boy seemed quiet after the accident. He sat silently in his chair, thumbing the fur of the Martian puppy abstractedly. They enjoyed an hour of this peace, and then the boy spoke.

"Can I see a heat-gun?" he asked softly.

"No," said Boardman.

"Please," said Clarence.

"Absolutely not," said the pilot.

"All I want to do is *see* one," said the boy. "Just for a *minute*."

"No," said Boardman.

"Oh, let him see the damned gun," said Clark.

"No," said Boardman.

"But what's the harm if I just *see* one? I mean, why can't I—"

"Please, Major," said Pfeifer. "Let the boy see your gun. We won't have any peace until you do."

The Major shook his head and sighed. He went to his gear and unstrapped it.

"Here," he said. "Look. That enough?"

"Can I hold it?"

"No!"

"Just for a *minute?* I mean, I won't *point* it or anything. I just want to *hold* it for a minute. Please! I just want to—"

"Let him hold it! Let him hold it!" screamed Clark. "He'll drive us all out of our minds if you don't let him hold the damned thing!"

"It's dangerous," said the pilot. "I can't give a child a gun—"

"Use the safety, can't you? Put the safety on it," said Pfeifer in desperation.

"This is crazy," said Boardman. "The craziest yet—"

"But I just want to *hold* it," said Clarence. "I merely want to *hold*—"

"Here!" said the pilot angrily, snapping the safety mechanism into place. "Hold the damned thing and shut up!"

The boy took the pistol eagerly and examined it up close.

"Look, Snapper!" he said to the Martian animal. "Look—here's a heat-gun. A real one!"

The puppy began to hop up and down, seeming to share the boy's excitement. Clarence displayed the gun to the owl-like animal, then he deftly reached across and undid the safety.

"Hey!" said Clark, lifting himself from the bunk for the first time.

"Watch what you're doing there!" said Pfeifer nervously.

"I know what I'm doing," said the boy.

"Give the gun back to me,

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son," said the Major, in the gentlest tone he had yet used to the boy.

"I will," Clarence promised. "But we have to do something first, Snapper and me."

"Snapper and who?" said Clark.

The boy's face suddenly became somber. His small fingers closed around the handle of the gun, finding the trigger.

"Don't do that, son," said the pilot, holding out his hand.

"I know what I'm doing, I said." The boy lifted the gun. It was a little heavy for his small hand, and the weapon trembled as he pointed it at Mr. Pfeifer.

"What are you doing?" said the president of the cereal company. "Don't point that thing at me, young man. Remember what you said—" The sweat flew from his forehead. "You said you wouldn't point it—"

"It was necessary to say that," said the boy in an odd voice.

He squeezed the trigger, and a needle of pure heat leaped from the mouth of the pistol to the center of Pfeifer's chest. The mark it left was so small it was barely visible, but the instantaneous change in the man's features indicated that death had come to him swiftly and certainly.

"No, no!" shrieked Eldon Clark, as the boy trained the wavering gun at his horizontal figure. He tried to leap out of the bunk, but not quickly enough. The red needle pierced his neck and sent him staggering against the side of the ship, in position for the boy's next and final shot.

"Now," said the boy to the horrified pilot, "you can teach me something about flying, Major Boardman. If you don't mind. You'll find that I can be a very good pupil, when I really want to learn something."

He leveled the gun at the Major, and Boardman recognized his determination for what it was. Silently, he went to the controls of the ship, and waited for the boy and his puppy to join him for the first lesson.

"This is the robot control switch," he said.

The boy listened intently to his discourse, and through his young ears, the owl-like Martian listened as well; joyfully, contentedly. It had taken so many years! So many years of patient waiting, to find a mind tender enough for penetration, receptive enough to be a friendly host for his hungry, yearning consciousness; a mind and a body with which to do all the wondrous things he had planned to do in this vast, marvel-filled universe! So many years! But now he had found him.

"And this," said the Major, "is star-drive."

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case of the vanishing yeast

by...JUDITH TREVELYAN

I saw her this afternoon, perched on the edge of a chair in the hotel lobby, with the same bright eager look about her, the look I remembered so well, as if she were waiting for somebody very, very important.

But there was something *w r o n g* about her that I couldn't put my finger on. Lord knows she was just attractive as ever, and as well-dressed, smart and neat. She'd have been a knock-out on any Tri-Di program.

But I let her go. Yes, maybe I should have followed her. I could have stopped her if I tried; I could have questioned her of course, and found out, once and for all. But I didn't. I couldn't.

Why? I don't know exactly, except for that intangible something that wasn't quite right. I could swear it was the same girl—but maybe that's just what was wrong. Because it has been years since the last time I'd seen Betty Harkness, and the girl in the lobby today was *too much* the same. A woman can do a lot with cosmetics and girdles—but I've never seen

I had a horrid feeling what the answer would be. "What kind of machine and what do you mean, forward or—?"

Tom Kallen had been a young hot-shot engineer, one of the boy geniuses the Government had lined up in those days. He was assigned to this Bakery Project, on a special top-secret Army contract which certainly did not call for his disappearing into thin air! What did Betty Harkness know?

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one yet who could make herself look twenty years old on a sunny afternoon when she's really so much older.

This thing happened during the late Cold War days—and if you were too young to be reading the papers that far back, you've probably seen it dug up in the Sunday papers plenty of times since. The newsboys tagged it *The Case of The Vanishing Yeast,* because of the nickname the Project had—the Bakery. As far as I know, it's the only unsolved disappearance case in the last quarter century, in this country at least.

Tom Kallen was a young hot-shot engineer, one of the boy-geniuses the Government had lined up in those days. He was assigned to this Bakery Project with four other guys, on a special top-secret Army contract for Prelco Instrument. And Betty Harkness was his Number One girl on the job.

She was the perfect secretary, in more ways than one—efficient, discreet, and business-like, as well as beautiful. There was just one little thing out of line about her, and that was enough.

She was crazy about Kallen.

She had it so bad that when you just mentioned his name, her whole face changed. And that first day, when I went up there, she was having a plenty hard time holding on to herself. He'd been missing two days then, and every time you found two people together that's what they were talking about. Nobody was even trying to work. They were all a little scared, and even more curious, and you couldn't blame them.

It was a crazy set-up to start with, and being cooped up together the way they were, the few people who were in on it couldn't think about anything else. There were thirteen of them altogether, including three children, and not counting the one-year-old baby, or the guards, who didn't live on the estate. The sleep-in population when I got there included the four men on the project, two wives, and their kids, two secretaries—Betty and a cute friendly blonde named Helen—and a housekeeper - and - handyman couple.

Officially, the outfit was labeled just Project B, but they picked up the Bakery nickname when they started out in business in an empty loft over a bakeshop in Brooklyn. Later on, Prelco sold the idea to the Government, and they all got moved out to this big estate on the outskirts of the Bronx, for a six-months trial period. If it worked out to look good, they were all supposed to get moved down to Oak Ridge, or to one of the other big outfits.

They'd been there four months when it happened, and not one of them had been off the grounds all that time.

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There was just one gate, with guards on a twenty-four hour shift, and electric fences all around. It was that secret.

Even the girls who worked there didn't know what it was all about. They'd started a code when they worked over the bakeshop, and stuck to it. Once I talked Betty into showing me some of her notes —a page of dictation from Kallen, and all I got was:

"I next tried a one point oh oh nine seven pancake input on the sugar loaf, and my readings improved considerably, but the variation throughout the mixer was still higher point oh nine vanillas..."

Betty got a big kick out of the look on my face when I saw that, after I spent two days building up to a look at that book. But I should have known she wouldn't let me see it if it would help any.

Of course, she didn't have to show me a thing, and she knew it. I didn't have any authority to snoop into that angle of it. The other four engineers on the Project had already reported direct to the Chief, in Washington, whatever they knew about the work Kallen was doing, and all I could do was keep awake and watch for a break or slip that might give us a lead. Somebody at the Bakery *had* to know something, and I had Harkness tagged for the gal who did, but there was no way I could grind it out of her. The Department was working on the outside, and all they wanted from me was to make sure nothing else happened until they wound up the case.

They'd already checked the obvious things, in the first couple of days after he disappeared. By the time they sent me in, they were pretty sure Kallen hadn't paid off a guard, or gone over the wall. They knew he wasn't hiding on the grounds, or in any house nearby, and a five-state dragnet hadn't caught him.

The thing that made it a little tough to figure—and this part wasn't in the papers —was that when he left, some equipment left with him. Two big hunks of machinery that weighed a half a ton together.

Over the fence...? Under the wall...?

I put them all through routine questionings the first few days, even though it had been done once already. But a week after Kallen popped off, all I knew for sure was that Betty Harkness had been crazy for Kallen since the outfit was started. Nobody seemed to know whether he returned the feeling. He was friendly to everybody, they said. He took walks around with Betty and Helen both, as well as with the other men. But he was a cool sort, and he certainly didn't confide in anybody.

If there was anything between the two of them, the

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Harkness girl was the only one left who could tell, and she wasn't saying. She always referred to him as Dr. Kallen, although most of them were on a first-name basis. And when I asked her whether there had been any special attachment between them, she looked me in the eye, and said without a quiver, "I'm sure that the others have already told you how I felt about him, and that he never so much as looked at me."

What do you do when just exactly the right weight in five feet five of black-haired, blue-eyed girl says a thing like that? I don't know what you'd do, but I said I was sorry, and changed the subject.

It was a soft job, some ways. Wonderful food, a good bed, service every way I turned, one beautiful girl and one real cute one to talk to whenever I wanted. They couldn't even say they were busy, partly because I was a cop, but mostly because anybody could see they weren't. All the time I was there, nobody even tried to do any work.

By the middle of the second week it wasn't so much fun any more. Mostly, it was Betty Harkness who made things tough. The rest of them had just settled down to a sort of vacation, waiting for the investigation to be over, so they could find out what came next. But that girl got tenser and more unhappy every day.

The others were sorry for her, and tried to do things to take her mind off what had happened. They'd all made up their minds about Kallen—maybe because he was smarter than they were, so they didn't like him much. Anyhow, everybody on the lot seemed sold on the idea that he was working with foreign agents. When I suggested he was maybe kidnapped, they could hardly keep from laughing.

"You don't know Tom," and that's all they'd say. I guess they really hated him.

Just the same, they all liked Betty and they were trying to make things easy for her. They just about drove her crazy with it, too, keeping her busy playing games and visiting and drinking tea all the time, when she only wanted to be alone.

From my point of view, that should have been just fine. I knew all along there was something she wasn't telling, and the more nervous she got the more chance there was that she'd slip and spill it.

So everything was going fine for me—except that I was falling for that girl like a ton of bricks. And every time my cop's mind told me, "Good, she's breaking!" I wanted to kick myself.

That's no way to solve a

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case. I've kicked myself plenty ever since, and I still do it, every time I look around my two-by-four hole here in the hotel, and read in the papers about some G-man hero.

The first break that looked any good at all came near the end of the third week on the case, when I was beginning to get fed up with the whole thing. Betty sneaked out on the crowd of happy-makers one afternoon, and I spotted her going off for a stroll through the woodsy part of the place. I knew how the path went, and I managed to duck around and get in her way, so that *she* accidentally found *me*—too late to turn around and walk the other way.

I'd been leaving her alone pretty much for a day or two before that, and she wasn't as suspicious as she might have been. At least, I didn't think so.

Well, we spent the whole afternoon talking and walking, and getting acquainted on a non-professional level, so to speak. We got back too late for the community supper. I'd had to do some hard work to arrange that, but it was worth it. The two of us ate together in the kitchen, and I could just see her loosening up.

I was careful not to say a word about Kallen. She took me on for a couple of games of Chinese Checkers when we finished eating, and after that she sat with me on the porch, just talking some more.

"I'll sure be glad when I can get out of here again," I said casually.

"When will that be?" She tried to act like she didn't care.

"I don't know," I told her. "If they don't break something from the outside, we may be here the rest of our lives."

She let out a long soft breath, and I turned around and tried to make out the expression on her face. It was dark out there, with just a little light coming through the windows from inside, and maybe I was wrong, but I could have sworn she looked relieved instead of the other way around. Maybe I was just so used to seeing her all tensed up that now she was relaxed I didn't know her expressions.

But looking at her that way, being close and friendly with her out on the porch on a spring evening, did something to me. I knew she was a decent kid, and I couldn't see why she was keeping back whatever she knew. I got this crazy angle all of a sudden, that if I just asked her straight, no tricks at all, she'd tell me the truth.

"Listen, kid..." I tried to keep it light, but I was dead serious. It meant a lot to me, not just for my job, but for certain vine-covered dreams

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I'd been growing that afternoon. "Listen, I don't know what went on with you and Kallen, and I don't think it's any of my business. But if you know anything, anything at all, that could straighten out this mess, why don't you give out with it? They'll find out sooner or later, anyhow, and..."

Again I tried to lighten it up. "...and we could have a lot more fun at a Broadway show than we can out here."

"Do you really think so?" They way she said it was funny, as if it just occurred to her for the first time that maybe we would crack the case. "You think they'll find out?"

She wasn't kidding, I realized, so I went into the Grade A salestalk about the Department. She listened, and kept shaking her head every once in a while, as if there were something I didn't understand.

"No," she said quietly, when I finished. "They're not going to find out that way. Not in a million years." And then she started giggling, and couldn't stop.

I didn't see what was so funny about it.

"All right," I said, a little stiff, "if you think nobody but you can crack it, why *don't* you?" She stopped laughing, and I tried just once more. "I don't know what kind of cockeyed loyalty makes you keep your mouth shut, but don't you see how important it is to find him?" You *must* realize that..."

"It's not loyalty," she interrupted me. "Its...it's much more selfish than that."

She stopped, and left me sitting and gaping at her, realizing she'd just admitted that she knew something after all. By the time I figured out a way to keep her talking, she'd started again by herself.

"Suppose I tell you the truth?" she asked. "Will you listen? Will you believe me?"

Baby, I thought, *I'd believe you if you told me I was a cigar store Indian!* But I didn't say a word out loud; I just nodded.

"All right," she said "I'll tell you. But if you *don't* believe it, it's not my fault. You know what they've been working on here... I mean you know generally—about the time measurements. Well, Tom Kallen"—and the way she said it was like saying God—"got a line on something different in the middle of his work. He reported it and asked for authorization to follow up his clue, but the Army refused. They were convinced it couldn't ever work, and—well, I doubt if it ever even got up to anyone high enough in command to grant permission. But it was too—crazy, on the surface at least."

She kept stumbling over her words as she talked, but she

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kept talking, and that was all I wanted.

"He tried to forget the whole thing, at least until the Bakery Project was finished, but he couldn't," she went on. "I think I was the only one who knew about it. I took down the memo, and—and he used to talk to me sometimes, anyhow. This wasn't top-secret, you see, but—well, it wasn't the kind of thing he'd talk about to the other men. It was—"

She broke off and stopped talking for so long I was afraid I'd lost her. But finally she smiled a little and started again.

"He tried to forget it, but he couldn't, and after we moved out here, he had plenty of spare time, and he began fooling around with it again. He had a big fight with himself about using Government materials for it, but he just *had* to see it through—I don't know if you'll see that," she added, pleadingly. "He just had to find out."

I nodded again and kept my mouth shut.

"Two weeks ago, he got it," she said abruptly. "He made some small experiments and found out it worked every time, but he wanted to try it on a person, and he could only do that himself. He rigged up the—machine—to go along with him, so he could get get back again if he wanted to, and—well, that's it. He went. I don't know whether it was forward or backward, or how far, or..."

"Hold on," I said. "Wait a minute. You just forgot one thing. What kind of—machine was it, and what do you mean, forward or —?" I had a horrid feeling what the answer would be.

"Oh," she said, perfectly deadpan, "I guess I didn't actually mention it. It—sounds too silly. It was a time machine, of course."

That did it.

I stood up and bowed politely from the waist, like they taught me in dancing class when I was a kid. I didn't trust myself to say anything —simply smiled and left.

I spent the night tossing in bed and hating myself, and I spent the next two days keeping out of Betty Harkness's way. I know when I'm licked. But she certainly did a magnificent job of telling that story—right up to the last couple of sentences, she had me thinking the answer was coming right out. Now I kept out of her way, because I didn't get any special kicks out of the twinkle in her eye whenever she looked at me.

Two nights later she came looking for me. I would have ducked her, but I was still on the job. If she wanted to tell me more fairy stories, there was nothing I could do but listen.

"I wanted to tell you," she said sweetly, "that I may leave tonight."

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"The same way he did?" I asked, wondering if some permission had come through without anybody telling me.

"Of course." She smiled demurely. "He said he'd come back for me. I can't be sure, of course, but I thought you'd want to know what happened if I did go."

"Thanks," I told her. "It's nice of you to be so thoughtful." But after I stamped away, I thought about it some more, and I figured I couldn't miss any bets.

The permanent workers all had little bungalows of their own, and she shared one with Helen, about two hundred yards from the big house where my room was. Just to play safe, I waited about five minutes after she headed off to her place, and then I tagged along. I found a spot under a big tree, just a little way off, where I could keep an eye on her room, and I stuck it out there.

After the first hour, I found a spot to sit down, and settled myself for a wasted night. But I had to see it through. I kept my eye on her window, and on the door—I could see both from where I was—and wondered why I ever wanted to be a cop.

About ten o'clock, her light went out, and she came over to the window, and pulled the shade up. I could just make her out, a dark solid blob against the general darkness, and she stood at the window quite a while. I think she was looking to see if I was out there anywhere, but I'm sure she couldn't have seen me.

Then I figured she'd gone to bed, because the dark shape moved away from the window, and there was no more sign of anything from the house.

By midnight, I was wondering why I hadn't called HQ for help overnight, and by one a. m. I was trying to remember when it was I had thought a spring night balmy and romantic. But I knew for sure nobody had come into or gone out of that house.

At one-twelve exactly—I looked at my watch in the flare of light before I started running—her window lit up like a crate of Roman candles had busted loose inside.

I made a dash for it, and then stopped just outside, knowing better than to jump into a lighted room without knowing something of what was inside. Under the window, I heard two voices.

"...I promised, didn't I?" It was a man, and I didn't have to guess too hard who it was. "Got everything? Make sure now..."

"Hurry!" That was Betty. "Never mind about anything. Just hurry! I'll tell you later."

I couldn't wait any more then. Whatever was inside besides the two of them, I had to face it.

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I straightened up, and backed off a few steps to make a running jump for the window, and I wasn't more than a fraction of a minute too late.

The light went out just about the same second I hit the glass, and when I got inside, nobody was there.

No, they didn't go out the door. The door was latched on the inside. The only windows out of my range of sight were in Helen's room, and she woke up when she heard the crash. They couldn't have had time to go through before that.

You can see why I wish I'd stopped that girl in the lobby today, just to make sure. Absolutely sure. Because when I came back up to the office and pulled out a picture of Betty Harkness I realized the close resemblance.

It was so close that she was wearing the same suit that girl in the lobby had on—the very same suit. It was still neat and smart and well-groomed when I saw it today, and maybe that's why I didn't put my finger on what was *wrong* till I saw the picture; the suit's years out of style now...

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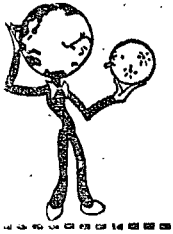

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the dancing statue

by . . . *WILL OURSLER*

"Will I find her ultimately and hold her and her loveliness in my arms? Will—"

I SUPPOSE it might be called a love story, a romance with an archeological twist, out of the East and its crumbling altars to forgotten gods. Above all, out of the remarkable life of my friend Joe Sutherland, III, explorer, adventurer, philosopher, humorist, and connoisseur of women and whiskey.

It began—for me—one afternoon when I returned from lunch to find on my desk a message from him, scribbled down by the telephone girl: "Jim, if your banking hours permit, get over to my apartment around five-thirty. Rather urgent. If I'm not there, don't hesitate to search. In the midst of life, etc., etc., Joe."

I could picture the inevitable grin on his lips as he dictated that message to the phone operator. The trouble with Joe Sutherland lay in that grin. One could never guess whether it was mere impish humor or a mask to hide deep, purposeful intent.

In any event, he had a spell over most of us. Later in the afternoon I went over to his house, located on East 57th Street, just off Sutton Place. The house itself was a ren-

Will Oursler, better known to readers of our companion magazine, The Saint Detective Magazine, tells the story of Joseph Sutherland the Third, explorer and adventurer, who knew he would have to go back across space and time in his persistent search for happiness and peace . . . .

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ovated brownstone, full of mementoes and trinkets, spears and knives and a thousand things I could not even identify, gathered by Joe on his travels. I had been here many times and when I found the front door ajar I did not hesitate to walk in without knocking.

There was no sign of Joe around, nor for the moment did I see Robert, his West Indian butler. For several moments I waited in the large living room, wandering around the room restlessly. On the top of his desk I noticed what looked like a manuscript. On the front page was scrawled, in Joe's writing: "Jim—please glance this over and deliver it to the proper authorities."

I picked up the document—it was two or three pages written in longhand—and began to read. The opening paragraph described a statue he had possessed for some years—a terracotta of a Balinese dancing girl; he had picked it up somewhere in the East Indies. "One night, several weeks ago," he wrote, "I awakened from a fitful sleep about two in the morning. For several seconds I lay motionless. Then I became aware that something or someone was moving in the darkness.

"I still did not move. But now, as my mind began to to emerge from sleep, and my eyes grew used to the darkness, I could see a light in the room, a green effulgence in the corner across from the bed. I pushed myself up a little. In that curious green light I saw the slim, enchanting figure of a naked girl dancing. This was a swirling Indonesian folk dance. Somewhere it seemed I heard music, a twanging, jangled rhythm."

"At the same time, I became aware that the size of this beautiful creature was exactly that of my Balinese statue, slender and lovely and sensuous—and barely three feet tall."

"I watched in fascination. And as I followed the sensuous movement of arms and hands, I heard myself speaking, my voice talked into nothingness, to a bit of terracotta molded by hands long dead. But the girl or the statue or whatever she was danced on and on, without hearing or seeing or knowing, long into the night. And as I watched, my conscious mind cried out its questions: Was this real or hallucination, dream or fact, miracle or madness?"

"My days and nights for these past few weeks have been lived in a unique and indescribable ecstacy. Nothing else matters—nothing in all the world—all the universe—only these moments with this magic, only this strange world I have found but which I share with no one—except her."

"She has not spoken, she has given no sign, no hint,

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yet I am sure that this has meaning and reality for me. Must I go back across space and time to find her? Is this a siren's dance luring me to doom? Will I find her ultimately and hold her and her loveliness in my arms? Will she then reveal to me what I—"

Abruptly, the writing broke off. I glanced up from Joe Sutherland's document and glanced through the doorway into the back bedroom where I knew the statue of the Balinese dancer stood upon its stand.

But today the pedestal was empty.

An instant later I heard a noise behind me and turned. Robert, his valet stood there. I knew by the man's expression that something dreadful had occurred.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"Gone. He left an hour ago." The man shook his head in distress. "I saw him walking down the stairs carrying that stature of his and murmuring things to it, and then waving to me as he got into the car, and calling out that someday he would be back perhaps but he could not be sure."

He was smiling and happy, Robert said, and holding the statue in his arms like a bride, as he drove off in the car.

As I say, it is a kind of love story. Except that it has been nearly seven years now and none of us have ever heard of him again, or seen the statue again, and no one is quite sure whether it is just his impish humor and one day he may still return to laugh at us all, or whether he really did drive off with his Balinese dancer into the great abyss of time.

THE FLOWERS OF VENUS

I am afraid I have said very little about the astonishing flora and fauna on Venus, and it is obvious that I cannot do justice to this tremendous subject in these few lines. I hope some day, as a matter of fact, to write a monograph on the explanation, in their mythologies, for the similarity of flowers and trees found on Venus, on Aldebaran Minor, and in the Hesperide System.

The Goffur plant is popular with Venusian women who use its flowers as decorations in their homes. The long, waving snake plant was called so by the colonists because of the soft, sibilant hissing of its leaves. The Sova plant, which releases an almost invisible mist when clumsily handled, usually puts the person handling it to sleep. And then there is the Bibul Tree, at the feet of which Venusian sages have taught since time immemorial,—a huge purple cone that whispers with a particular language of its own when the rains come.

Vithaldas H. O'Quinn

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bring back some history

by...MARK KISKER

The stranger claimed he was a physicist doing research on time, and that he'd come back from the future! Ha!

"I've been with Security for a long time, but this one guy was the queerest I ever seen. Boy, he beat 'em all. He musta been one of them psychotics or sumthin'.

"I first seen him when Jack and me was drivin' in from the terminal ballistics range. There he was, just walkin' out into the desert, pretty as you please. I seen him first. There was sumthin' funny about him. Maybe it was the funny clothes he had on, all sleek like a skier, or maybe it was the big bundle of stuff he had.

"Of course no one walks around there between the ranges, 'specially in the summer.

"Well, Jack and me drove across the sand and got him. First I asked for his pass kinda nice-like, 'cause there's lots of nuts around here that get to be big wheels somehow, and you can't tell when you might run into one. Well, he kinda smiled and said he ain't got no pass. So I asked him what he was doin' on the station, and he said he'd just finished some business here and was leavin'.

"Oh yeah, and then we

Mark Kisker tells the story of the harassed security officer who runs into a scientist from the future. Or does he? Kisker, a University of California graduate, an experimental psychologist whose work centers around a project in Human Engineering, has an unusual story here . . .

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looked in his bundle, and oh boy! It was just loaded with documents and all kinda official stuff. There was pitchers and plans and things like that. So we just popped him into the truck and drove him in to see the chief. I expected the guy to give us a bad time, but he was real nice about it, and gave us real fast answers, but there was sumthin' wrong with the guy. He was just like a kid. Not silly or scared, I mean, but looked real sincere and too trustin', like kids are.

"Well, the chief just lit up when we brung him in. He acted like it happened every day on the outside, you know, but I could tell he was real pleased. Well, the chief just sat him down and me and Jack watched him while the chief looked through the bundle, real careful-like, goin' over each paper one by one. Pretty soon he looked up at the guy and stared up at him for a minute, then he just picked up the phone and called the Technical Director and the C.O.

"Boy, I knew that meant sumthin' big. I guess I'd caught the biggest spy in the history of the rocket business, but I just sat there real calm like, as if I done it every day. Of course I was real alert, ready to grab him if he tried anything.

"Well, real soon the two really big wheels got there. The chief introduced them to me and Jack, and I tried to shake hands real strong and smile and look at the prisoner at the same time, so as to make a real good impression. I didn't ever meet them before, and I wanted to make the most of it. They sat down and started askin' the guy questions real civil-like. He didn't seem to mind the questioning, but he sure had a queer story. I coulda made up a better one as I was wakin' up in the mornin'. I guess he was plannin' on his real frank and boyish ways to get him out of it, but they was just makin' it worse for him.

"He gave some real funny kinda name. They asked him where he was from, and he kinda smiled, then said he was from the base here. They asked his address, and he gave a phoney one. Didn't even sound like a real one. Then they quit askin' the little questions and got around to the big ones. They asked him what he was doin' here. Then he really cut loose with the queer stories. Said he was a physicist doin' research on time, and that he's come back to here from the future. He said that after some big war, all the records was destroyed by some kinda gas, but that the equipment came through O.K. After it was all over, there was some kinda big international agreement to stop war, and so the government gave the whole lab to some

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university. They took down the fence and paid a whole lot of those crack-pots to tinker all day. Well, he said, they made lotsa discoveries and the place became a sort of a national shrine, like an institution. They wanted to write a history of the place, so they sent him back here to collect material.

"The C.O. looked at him like you do some guy from the looney-bin. You don't know how to answer him without hurtin' his feelin's, yet you got to do sumthin'. The Technical Director looked a little more serious, like he was even thinkin' over what the guy was sayin'. You mightta thought the TD was even believin' the guy a little, but I've heard he's awful smart, the TD, I mean.

"Well, they was stumped. He'd just repeat the same story all over again, all with a kind of enthusiasm like he enjoyed it. He'd even tell about this make-believe lab he worked in and everythin', and how he'd gone through all offices in the lab and took all kinds of documents and stuff like that. I don't think he really done that, cause us Security was all over the place, and we don't miss much. I had it all figured out that there was a big secret spy ring, and this guy was just some sap they got to carry their stuff around.

"The big wheels finally got tired of the same stuff all afternoon, so they had me and Jack take his fingerprints and book him. We locked him up and then put a watch on his cell. I guess they wasn't takin' any chances with this guy.

"Washington didn't have no prints on the guy, but I kinda figured this 'cause of the way he talked; kinda forrin-like, you know. I had him pegged for some kinda forriner. And then there was some guys from CIA that come out to see him. They got the same story all over again. They was really baffled, 'cause of the way he acted, real confident and polite. He didn't get mad or upset or anythin', even when the Chief had me and Jack rough him up a little bit. He just kinda analyzed us, like he thought he was a head-thumper or sumthin'. He used some real big words like those guys do, and he was so smooth-talkin' that I had to quit listenin' to him, 'cause he made me real uncomfortable.

"Well, all the wheels was really sweatin' it out. There he was all locked up, and no one knew what to do. He sorta wanted out I guess, 'cause he said sumthin' about wantin' to get back out into the desert and go home so they wouldn't have to keep the power on for him, and he felt bad about usin' up all that power! What a nutty story!

"I guess maybe it was be-

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cause he kept talkin' about goin' back to this place in the desert that I got the idea there must be sumthin' out there, like a tunnel or secret hidin' place. Well, I talked to the chief about it and he thought it was a good idea. We asked this character where his goin'-back place was, and he gave out with a bunch of stuff that sounded like arithmetic or sumthin'. He said he'd told us where it was in the only way he could. Then he asked us if we expected him to tell us it was behind a certain bush out in that hundred-million acres. But the chief and I wouldn't let him lie to us, and we finally got him to tell us. I mean, we got a good idea of where it was.

"Well, me and Jack went out there and looked all over that desert. There wer'nt no footprints, no holes, no secret hidin' places or anythin'. There just wasn't nothin'. We came back in and told the Chief, and the three of us went in past the guards and told the guy he'd lied to us. In that funny, real frank way of his he said he hadn't lied. Ha! That reminds me, he said he didn't even know how to lie. Said he'd read about it, but only some kind of crazy people did it. Anyway, this guy had the nerve to tell us he'd show us the spot! Well, that was real funny, I thought. Kind of a dumb way to try and trick us.

"The big wheels thought that one over for a long time. Finally they decided to let him show us. But we was all prepared for tricks. We had some of the Marines stationed here comb the whole area all morning. While they was out there, we got all the rest of the Security Police that wasn't needed somewhere else and loaded this guy into the paddy wagon. Me and Jack rode inside with him. We was unarmed, in case he thought he could get our guns. I knew he wouldn't of gotten mine, but maybe it was a good idea. I mean, he mighta got Jack's, and Jack woulda felt bad if the chief had let me have my gun but not Jack. Well, the Chief was up front with the driver, and there was a truck full of Security right behind us. All the rest of the traffic was cleared all the way out to the ranges. We was sure prepared.

"Well, we got to where this guy said his place was and stopped. As soon as the rest of the Security had formed a circle around the paddy wagon, we had this guy get out. He kinda looked around and blinked, like he was sizin' up the situation and plannin' to escape. He musta been kinda dumb, 'cause he didn't even notice me and Jack get our guns back from the Chief. Finally, he told us it was about half a mile-he didn't say mile, but it was sumthin' like that. Oh yeah, half a mile

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over toward a kinda small hill. It was in a kinda different place than he'd told me and Jack before, so I was really lookin' for a trick of some sort. Well, he took off walkin' with all of us right behind him and on both sides, all carryin' our guns. We coulda fought an army, there were so many. In fact it mightta been kinda fun, fightin' an army of jerks like him. They probably woulda used cap pistols or sumthin'.

"Well, we was all walkin' along when all of a sudden he drops down on one knee and reaches for sumthin'. I had my .45 out before you could say Jack. . . well, Jack. I was pointin' at him when he just stood up again holdin' one of them little horney toads. He started askin' us a whole bunch of questions about it like he was a bug collector, but we just shoved him on. It was probably some kind of trick that we caught. He kept on tryin' to pick up other stuff or look at plants and things, but we finally told him that next time it meant trouble. He started talkin' the same way he did when I roughed him up, big words and all that stuff. He musta had real good control of his temper, cause he didn't get mad.

"Suddenly he just stops and tells everybody that this is the place. We all looked at where he was lookin', but there was just desert. I mean, there wasn't nothin' there. There was just a few scraggly bushes you could see right through, and all the rest was just sand and little pebbles.

"When the chief asked him where, he says 'right here' and points right in front of him. 'There?' says the chief. 'There is a probability of point four that a four-unit displacement occurred', this guy says like some sort of college professor. Then he looked kinda farther in front of himself and takes a step forward."

"I musta been lookin' down at the ground or sumthin', 'cause suddenly I just don't see him no more. I figured he musta jumped behind me all of a sudden, so I whirls around real fast and jumps just a little, in case he was goin' to grab me or sumthin'. Well, he sure musta, cause I felt this here big WHAM inside my head and saw a bunch of lights and spirals and stuff. There was a sorta real fast spinnin' feel, then I guess I don't remember no more. That is, until I just waked up here and you guys started askin' me questions. I guess he musta conked me one, eh Doc?"

"Hey, did I do sumthin' real wrong, like let him get away or sumthin'? You guys are all lookin' at me so funny! HEY, WHERE AM I? WHO ARE YOU GUYS? YOU DON'T TALK RIGHT! WHATTA YOU LOOKIN' AT ME SO FUNNY FOR?

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universe in books

by...STEFAN SANTESSON

A report on recent titles of interest to Fantasy and Science Fiction readers . . .

Authors facing a shrinking market as trade publishing interest in Science Fiction hits a new low (a major reason for the infrequent appearance of this column) have had reason to bless the continued faith in the field of publishers like Martin Greenberg of Gnome Press and Ian Ballantine of Ballantine Books, both publishers of novels and collections of stories by men who personify, to a large extent, the fields of Science Fiction and Fantasy.

Who is to say what is the reason for the decline in SF titles. Perhaps the difficulty is that life has caught up with Science Fiction—perhaps the quality of much of what has been published has contributed—but the fact is undeniable that LIFE Magazine's two million Science Fiction readers, of not too long ago, *would* be difficult to locate today.

Whose is the responsibility? Certainly not writers like Ray Bradbury, William Tenn, Theodore Sturgeon, John Wyndham, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Sheckley, and still others, who have contributed

"Universe in Books" reappears, after an absence of several months, with a discussion of two important anthologies, an important book on what has been described as "flying crockery", two collections of stories—excursions into fantasy and scientific improbabilia—that are likely to interest you, and other contributions to the field, learned and otherwise.

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so much to the field. But why is it—what do *you*, as a reader, think is the reason—why fewer and fewer science fiction titles are published in hard-cover editions today, and why the trend, in the paper book field, is towards collections of stories and anthologies rather than original novels?

Let me know what *you* think is the reason. I am rather curious.

Arthur C. Clarke, scientist, lecturer, novelist, explorer, author of CHILDHOOD'S END, THE EXPLORATION OF SPACE, INTERPLANETARY FLIGHT, and other works is the author of these stories told by Harry Purvis, TALES FROM THE WHITE HART (Ballantine Books, 35 cents), which have delighted all of us in recent years. Writing in New York, Colombo, Miami, London, Sydney and elsewhere, Clarke has deliberately set out to tell "tall" SF stories, "stories that are unintentionally unbelievable; not, as is too often the case, unintentionally so."

The peculiar charm of the White Hart stories, however, is the haunting gleam of plausibility in so many of them, and the suspicion that it *is* quite possible that tomorrow—or the day after tomorrow—we ourselves may still experience these events.

Consider, for instance, the invention of the man who recorded cerebral impulses and having recorded them, in their full vigour or pathos, then could play them back again.... Not only was he able to record the emotions, the "subtle nuances of gustatory discrimination" of France's most distinguished gourmet, he was able to record, and play back, decidedly more unusual thoughts....

But take the case of the meat-eating orchid, the electronic brain that sassed a general, the ice-berg that was piloted down to Florida, the rather strange armaments race that almost wrecked Hollywood, and Dr. Cayor's startling venture into a zero-gravity field, and you will find yourself almost agreeing with the publisher that here is "a book of unholy delights."

Assuming delight may be described as unholy....

Ted E. Dikty, Executive Editor with Shasta Publishers, Chicago Science Fiction house, has been responsible, for several years, for a series of widely discussed anthologies of what his publishers describe as "the most facinating fiction of the future." The present anthology, THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES AND NOVELS—1956 (Frederick Fell, $3.50), is recommended to the reader

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who—whether aficionado or otherwise—is interested in the challenging quality of science fiction.

While it is perhaps debatable that here is "the best of the stories about Tomorrow and its people"—anthologies reflect, and stand or fall on the standards set and the likes of the anthologist—here are some decidedly interesting extrapolations upon today's premises or facts, including Thomas N. Scortia's much discussed *The Shores of Night*, Robert F. Young's sensitive *Jungle Doctor* R. De Witt Miller's unusual *Swenson, Dispatcher*, and Walter M. Miller, Jr., superb *A Canticle for Leibowitz*...

John Wyndham is one of those disturbing writers, so often British, who manage, in their stories and in their novels, to paint an uncomfortably credible and far from cheerful portrait of that World of Tomorrow towards which we are stumbling, agonizedly or otherwise. While a running thread of humor can undoubtedly be seen in the present group of stories, TALES OF GOOSEFLESH AND LAUGHTER (Ballantine Books, 35 cents), which may account for the title, there is much of the same grim realism that is so characteristic of these writers, living so much closer, as they do, to Zero Day.

The Wheel and *A Present from Brunswick* are examples, in a sense, of this thinking, while *Wild Flower*, the story of Felicity Fray, has a challenge of its own. To Felicity Fray, Science is the enemy of the world that lives and breathes; it is "a crystalline formation on the harsh naked rock of brain, mindless, insensitive, barren, yet actively a threat, an alien threat" that she fears, as un-understandingly as an animal fears fire.

John Wyndham, in his brilliant novel, RE-BIRTH (Ballantine Books), as in many of these stories, is obviously an author worth studying and remembering. It is perhaps an over-simplification to say about these stories as does the publisher, that here is "reading for fun—with no limitations of space or time." This is more than "fun". This is an important voice in a field that needs thoughtful voices.....

There are some who may say that reactions to poetry, particularly to translations from the Upper Venusian, do not actually belong in a book column. And perhaps this is a valid point, but I have been interested in the reactions to the appearance in the January issue of a colleague's translation of an Upper Venusian Funeral Chant, which he claimed to have recorded in the course of a field trip

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to the Aakan hills on Venus.

Be that as it may, we have received an interesting letter from Dr. Ernest R. Johanson, of Oakland, California, Professor of Venusian Literature of the Inter-Galactic University, Dr. Johanson taking mild exception to the rendering of the phrase "Thali-ookala samathii mekhe mekhe" as "the final darkness from whence we came".

"Undoubtedly the translator", writes Dr. Johanson, "was confused by the repetition of the word 'mekhe'—to proceed. We find this use of the double verb infrequently in modern day Upper Venusian."

"With the cooperation of the Department of Literature and the Department of Archaeo-Biology at the School of Geography and History at I-G University, an attempt was made to trace the origin of the double verb to ancient rites performed by the Aeegnoods of Lower Venus. We were successful in finding several excellent specimens of leaf writing, wherein the Aeegnoods set down the formula for such rites as birth, encapsulation, splitting, and death. And in almost every instance, we find that telltale double verb.

Saadi aeedie asttaadco
sedii sedii viikie
Look, O Father Sun
As our Brother enfolds."

"Note particularly", writes Dr. Johanson, "how the double verb 'sedii sedii' expresses the act of enfolding, this from the Rite of Encapsulation, where the organism encloses himself at the final extremity of adolescense to await the metamorphosis into adulthood. The double verb is used to express the plurality of action involved in encapsulation, not merely the action itself."

Our thanks to Dr. Johanson, of Oakland, California....

Aime Michel's THE TRUTH ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS (Criterion Books, $3.95) can be recommended to those readers who are interested in the question of what the UFO are, where they come from, and what it is possible they want. Michel, eminent French mathematician and engineer, evaluates the theories put forward to explain sightings throughout the world, including those advanced by Professor Donald Menzel of Harvard and Air Force analysts. He also goes into, at some length, a theory by Lieutenant Plantier, a French Air Force officer, which may conceivably explain the origin of the UFO and how they break through the thermal barrier.

Plantier's first assumption is that a hitherto unknown

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form of energy is distributed in space in practically unlimited quantities, and that secondly, "a way exists to liberate this energy, by transforming it into energy of a more degraded kind, in the same way, for example, as the stroke of a hammer against an anvil transforms kinetic into thermal energy." Plantier's third hypothesis is that "the liberation of this cosmic energy makes it possible to create, at the point where it operates, a local field of force that can be varied and directed at will. This local field may be likened to the magnetic field existing in a solenoid, or between the poles of a magnet or of the earth itself." These are the hypothesis which are sufficient for Lt. Plantier to visualize the ideal interplanetary engine. If, as Michel points out, this cosmic energy *is* liberated, "the motor postulated by the forcefield of the third hypothesis" will be created.

Civilian Saucer Intelligence worked with the publishers in editing and checking the data for the American edition.

Andy Anderson's THE VALLEY OF THE GODS (Andoll Publishing Co, Baraboo, Wisc., —$2.) is a rather curious novel by a young musician who apparently has studied occult phenomena, telepathy and telekinesis. His characters are descendants of the survivors of the final atomic war.

If any of you somehow missed the Abelard Press edition of Theodore Sturgeon's beautiful group of stories, E PLURIBUS UNICORN, this is now available in a Ballantine Books edition. Groff Conklin, in his introduction, inadequately describes this as an "extraordinary collection of love letters to the Spirit of the Unicorn". This column completely agrees with Conklin, that "you don't read these stories: they happen to you!", so, if the experience of E PLURIBUS UNICORN still has to come to you, hunt up the Ballantine edition (35 cents at your nearest bookstore) tonight!

And if you still haven't read Roy A. Gallant's interesting EXPLORING MARS (Garden City Books, $2.), do so soon. You may find yourself disagreeing with the author's thinking, but this *is* an effective (and beautifully illustrated) work on that strange planet.

Erik Bergaust, rocket and missile editor for *American Aviation* and guided missile consultant for several engineering and aircraft companies, and William Beller, managing editor of *Aero Digest*

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and an expert in aerodynamics, were uniquely qualified to write the definitive—and still popular—story of the background of the Earth Satellite project, SATELLITE (Hanover House, $3.95).

Professor Herman Oberth in his introduction, recommends the book to th ose who are interested in "tomorrow's space fight" now that "space fight is no longer a fantasy of children and lunatics. Rather, humanity is faced with the great and serious growth of a new science. More than 70 years ago a well-known physicist said: 'Tomorrow man will even use electricity for lighting. But it is difficult to prove!' Half a century ago in a restaurant at Lindau at the Bodensee, a waiter arrogantly told me, while pointing at Count Zeppelin: 'LOOK at him! There goes that crazy man who wants to fly!'"

The final title to be discussed this time is perhaps the most difficult to appraise with complete objectivity. THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, SIXTH SERIES (Doubleday, $3.50), is a remarkable illustration of why *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Anthony Boucher, is—as is *Fantastic Universe*—so widely read and so influential in the field today.

Until the day when THE BEST FROM FANTASTIC UNIVERSE is published (I can hear one book-seller friend groaning at even the threat of another anthology), I must and do recommend this anthology as representative of the best, and the most thoughtful in Science Fiction and Fantasy.

Cyril Kornbluth introduces us to Functional Epistemology in his *The Cosmic Expense Account;* Jay Williams introduces us to an extremely credible Martian culture in his *The Asa Rule;* we share in the memories of Dr. Mainauduc, the Mesmerist, in Avram Davidson's *Kings Evil;* Frederik Pohl—in under three thousand words—describes the grim world of *The Census Takers;* Poul Anderson pokes wicked fun at an institution in his *The Barbarian;* and Ward Moore, known for his contributions to "improbabilia", contributes *No Man Pursueth.*

All in all, Anthony Boucher's THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION is a thoroughly satisfactory and rewarding group of stories—by writers known to all of you who read *FANTASTIC UNIVERSE*..

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DRAWER IN THE SAND

The Story of the Cover

A long time ago we knew another planet. In these days when we are no longer a young people—when we live surrounded by the ruins of yesterday—it is good to sometimes think of those days.

Perhaps, in other times, we would have been called a strange people. The ruins that were our cities so long ago—the shells that were our space ships—the memories that are a part of our blood—are not too important to most of us who remain, who live in our own world, and who feel no need of vulgar speech. We talk together in our minds, in the way man has done for so long, and it seems strange—almost disgusting—that there ever was a time when man insisted on breaking the silence around us with words, loud insistent words.

No, we do not need what the ancients called "speech", and we do not need it to share our thoughts with our brothers across the horizon. You simply pause—stand where you are—ignore the soft whisper of the gleaming sand and of the air around you and the invisible sounds around you, and withdraw into a rich dark void—someone once called it a space in time, whatever that may mean—and you search towards where you know the person you want to share your thoughts with is to be found, and soon you have made contact.

We are, admittedly, an old and a tired people. When you walk in the shadows of yesterday, when you do not die—as the ancients used to call it, when you do not need nourishment—again in the sense of the old days, when you simply exist, the time between the rising and the setting of the sun can be long and sometimes very lonely...

It is then that some of us amuse ourselves. One of us is a master drawer-in-the-sand, and he has the gift, denied to most, of creating faces and images that we vaguely remember knowing. He says we did know them—and very likely he is right.

Sometimes he draws a strange thing in the sand that he calls by its old sound-name, a *mappe*, but he has never explained to us, in thought or by voice, what this word means. He draws strange shapes and ridges in this sand on which we walk, day after day, and he tells us this was our home.

Perhaps it is true. It was all so long ago....

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the students

by . . . *JACK LEWIS*

He remembered the strong hands that pulled him away — the uniform men who'd seized and hustled him away.

THE boy according to school records was: Stephen Davis; age nine; entrance I.Q. 61.7; psychological deviant probability .006. He was a thin lad with a triangular jaw and very bright skin. He snapped his fingers impatiently.

"Attendant! Attendant!"

Ted Rowland flicked the off-switch on the daylight projector which had been depicting an arithmetic lesson through the use of animated cartoons.

"Something wrong, Mr. Davis?" he inquired.

The boy frowned. "I'll say there is. Where's the attendant?"

Rowland's eyes travelled past the thirty-eight students to a bald, mild-eyed man who was engaged at the Serve-All dispenser at the rear of the classroom.

"I'm sure he'll be with you in a moment, Mr. Davis," he said. "As you can see, he's taking care of Miss Reed at the moment."

The boy called Stephen Davis squirmed in the desk-chair assembly which was constructed along the gener-

Ex-New Yorker Jack Lewis, now living in Kansas City, a SF reader since the days of Gernsback, reports that a visiting New York school teacher, who'd read this story in manuscript, predicted that the day the story appeared "The School Teachers Union will commence work on a Jack Lewis statue in the middle of Central Park." We shall see...

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al lines of a mid-twentieth century contour lounge, while the attendant exchanged a look with the teacher and topped the ice cream soda he was preparing, with a cherry treated with a tasteless decal depicting the scene of Pearl Harbor and the date 1941. He set the glass—an ornate affair etched with multiplication tables-in front of a girl of about ten, and hurried to the boy's side

"Yes, Mr. Davis."

Stephen Davis looked up contemptously. "Took you long enough," he sulked.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Davis," the bald-headed man said, "but I was catering to the needs of Miss Reed."

Stephen Davis pushed out his lower lip. "Bring me an orangeade," he said. "A big one."

"Yes, sir."

"And try not to be all day about it."

The attendant exchanged another glance with the teacher.

Ted Rowland coughed. "Please," he said, "may we go on with the lesson?"

"How about my orangeade?" the boy said.

"Paul will serve you while we're viewing the lesson," Rowland said mildly. "Now please try to refrain from further interruption."

He switched on the projector and once more the barnyard actors went into their routine. There was a rabbit, two dogs, a cat, and a horse. The problem was to split thirty apples between the five of them. In the first try, distribution of the fruit was attempted through the snatch and grab method; while the second time the division was accomplished by a one-for-you and one-for-me method, as distributor. In both cases the project ended in a barnyard fight with the horse getting most of the apples and the rabbit none.

Only after the second dog—acting as mediator—applied the principle of division to the problem, was the division of the apples accomplished in an equitable manner, wherupon the five animals faded happily off the screen with six apples apiece.

Rowland managed a smile. "Any questions?" he inquired.

A flurry of conversation danced across the classroom. Over it a sandy-haired boy said: "Why did the animals get five apples each. A horse is bigger than a rabbit why *shouldn't* he have more to eat?"

Rowland swallowed hard. The symbolism of the situation did not escape him. "The pictures were simply to illustrate a principle of arithmetic," he said. "Naturally, in real-life a horse would require more to eat than a rabbit."

"What would a rabbit do with apples in the first place?" another boy said. "I like it better the way they

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divided them the first time."

Abruptly, Stephen Davis began to snap his fingers again. Rowland ignored him as long as he could, then crooked as index finger at him. "Yes, Mr. Davis?"

Stephen Davis squirmed in in the contour chair till he'd maneuvered into a half-sitting position. "I think it was a stupid picture," he announced.

A ripple of laughter floated across the room.

Encouraged the boy said: "It's stupid. And you're stupid!"

The class roared.

Rowland tried to ignore the bedlam by opening a book which lay on the desk. The volume was entitled: *BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS OF OUR JUNIOR CITIZENS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM.*

Quite by accident he opened the book to Chapter Six-*The Encouragement of Normal Instincts.* He didn't have to read the neat rows of fine print. Like everything else in the book, Chapter Six had been ingrained into his mind with indelible clarity. Without looking at the text he pretended to read while the words marched around in his mind:

"Irreparable damage may be done to the minds and authority and unwarrented personalities of our Junior Citizens by the use of excess discipline. The teacher should at all times remember that revolt against adult authority is a normal behavior pattern and should be encouraged, rather than suppressed."

With considerably more emphasis than he'd intended. Rowland slammed it shut.

"Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!" Stephen Davis screamed.

Rowland laid the book on the desk. "If you've quite finished summing up your opinions, Mr. Davis," he said. "I'd suggest that we get back to the lesson."

The monorail that served Long Island's south shore was late that afternoon. Furthermore the evening paper advised him that the Board of Estimate had—for the fourth time—kicked back into committee the long-overdue legislation for teacher's pay raises.

Because of these, and other factors, Ted Rowland arrived at the fifty-year-old split-level house where he lived with his Sister, in a state of thinly-veiled annoyance.

Alice was waiting for him at the door. She greeted him pleasantly, made a note of his smouldering irritation, then tactfully withdrew into the kitchen, while Rowland sank wearily into the arm chair and reread for the third time how the powers-that-be had scuttled his pay bill.

He'd needed the raise-needed it bad. Lord knows, Alice had been swell. That was the trouble. What with her work-

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ing a full-time-job and acting as homemaker at the same time, she'd had little time left for any life of her own. Right from the beginning Rowland had suspected that his Sister's breakup with that young lawyer, Bill Nelson, had been due—at least partly—to her complete and utter devotion to domestic matters.

"Dinner," Alice said.

Ted Rowland got up. He was more than a little annoyed at himself for allowing his sourness to rub off on Alice and made a note to make it up to her.

He waited till the meal was almost over and said: "How'd it go at the office today, Sis?"

"All right, Ted."

"Seen Bill Nelson lately?"

"Now Ted. That's over and done with. I don't want to talk about it."

"Okay. What would you like to talk about?"

"Let's talk about you, Ted. How did things go at school today?"

"Not bad. About the same."

"No they didn't, Ted. Something's wrong. What is it—that Davis child again?"

"No, Sis. Nothing's wrong. It's just that I've been preoccupied. What with the fall faculty tests coming up next week I'll have to do some heavy cramming."

"You go ahead, Ted. I'll clear the dishes."

Rowland reentered the living room where he removed a textbook from between a pair of bookends which were moulded into the bust of Horace Mann. The title of the book was *BRYANT'S GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL TEACHING*. Since Alvin Bryant—the author of the book—was current president of the Board of Education, Rowland was reasonably sure that the Fall faculty exams would consist primarily of matters contained in Bryant's own volume. That was how it had worked in the past.

He sat down, thumbed open the dog-eared pages and began reading:

"Ever since the introduction of progressive education in the mid-twentieth century, teaching methods have followed a steady trend toward a more liberal curriculum.

"This new era in student-teacher relationship has resulted in a general age of enlightenment, until now, in the early years of the twenty-first century we have reached a point where faculty members as well as society in general can look back in shocked amazement to the "dark ages" when "teaching" consisted chiefly of brow beating our Junior Citizens."

Rowland flipped some pages:

"For nearly a century now, psychologists have recognized the fact that excess authority and iron-fisted discipline, do little more than to create a feeling of insecurity in the minds of our Junior Citizens.

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However it was not until this present era of enlightenment that—"

And more pages:

"There is only one therapy for the elimination of psychological maladjustment in our Junior Citizens. That therapy is tolerance!"

Rowland slammed the book shut and started to replace it between the Horace Mann bookends, but somehow the act of replacing Bryant's volume in the proximity of the great educator seemed to border on sacrilege.

He threw the book into the corner.

Rowland arrived in class the following morning to find roughly half the contour desks filled with an unruly assortment of noisy youngsters. He ignored the boisterousness and immediately commenced to set up a space movie in the daylight projector. The film, while of dubious educational value, did contain a few extremely subtle moral concepts as well as some not-so-subtle (or moral) illustrations in second-year sexology.

Primarily, of course, the purpose of the film was to quiet the room down until about 10:30 when the balance of the class would have straggled in.

The film ended with a good 75% of the seats filled—a good percentage, considering that a student was not compelled by law to attend school, unless in their own opinion the curriculum was presented in a manner interesting enough to warrant their attendance.

Rowland was just congratulating himself on an exceptional showing, when the percentage was further increased in the form of Stephen Davis entering the room.

"Good morning, Mr. Davis," Rowland said. "Please be seated. We're about to begin."

Stephen Davis' lip curled. Then his hand came up bashing one of the smaller boys across the mouth.

"Yaaa!" the smaller boy screamed.

"Please gentlemen," Rowland said. "Go to your seats. We're already an hour-and-a-half late."

The Davis boy met his stare.

"I'll sit down when I'm good and ready," he said thinly. "I'm not taking orders from no stupid teacher!"

"*Any* stupid teacher," Rowland corrected dutifully. The use of a double negative implies positive action."

Stephen Davis grinned around tiny, sharp teeth. "What's the difference?" he piped shrilly. "You're still stupid." And sat down defiantly.

The class screamed with delight.

Rowland felt his blood-pressure beginning to rise. He hated himself for allowing the boy to get under his skin

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this way. Yet there was something about the child that made him forget the carefully ingrained training in Progressive Education.

He crossed the room to where the daylight projector stood like a waiting robot. "Today," he announced, "we have a film that will take us to Asia, where you'll be able to see first-hand how people in that part of the world live. Now before we begin are there any questions?"

"If you had any brains, you'd be working instead of teaching school," Stephen Davis said without warning. "That's what my Father said."

In the front of the room, one of the girls began to giggle, while the rest of the class settled into an expectant hush. Rowland commenced setting up the projector, slotting the film, carefully ignoring the boy.

It was progressive education. That's what it was. A hundred years ago a brat like Stephen Davis would have had his backside blistered by the back of his hand. But now? He wondered if the people who'd inaugurated this so-called progressive education had ever had to cope with something like this.

He locked the film in place and reached for the on-switch.

"The first thing we'll see," he announced, "is an airview of the coast of Japan as we approach Tokyo harbor. Are you ready?"

"No." Stephen Davis said. "I'm not ready. I want an ice cream soda. Where's the attendant?"

For just a second, Rowland's reflexes jerked his index finger toward where the attendant stood poised at the Serve-All dispenser. Then he gritted his teeth and said: "I'm sorry, but you'll have to wait till we've finished."

The girl in the front row began to giggle again.

Rowland threw in the switch, and the shore-line of Japan leaped onto the wide view screen accompanied by the whisper of jet engines from four separate sound tracks.

Then from the corner of his eye, Rowland saw Stephen Davis derrick himself out of the form-fit desk. Slowly and defiantly, the boy began walking toward him. When he reached the spot where Rowland worked the projector he stopped, fists clenched, staring up at him through very bright eyes.

On the screen, the Tokyo skyline had flattened to a bird's eye view of ribbons of tiny streets crawling between towering buildings. But no one in the classroom was watching. The important drama was taking place among the spectators.

"Do I get an ice cream soda or don't I?" Stephen Davis inquired coldly.

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"You don't," Rowland said sharply. "Go back to your seat." Now that he'd said it, he felt strangely better—even though it would probably mean a hassle with the school board and possibly even the Student Council, he felt better for having taken a stand.

For just a moment it appeared that the very audacity of his action had succeeded in backing the boy down. Then Stephen Davis moved. Projector and table teetered under the boy's vicious push. For an instant the airview of Tokyo danced across walls and ceiling, then dissolved into emptiness as the projector crashed into inaction against the classroom floor.

Almost immediately, smoke began to issue from the smashed equipment. Rowland stooped over to right it. Simultaneously, from the edge of his vision he was aware of the flash of a tiny foot and the next instant he was lying face down on the classroom floor.

The classroom literally screamed with glee.

Rowland was aware of lying there and clenching his fists while Stephen Davis' laughing mouth and sharp, white teeth danced before his eyes. Then the boy's face seemed to be engulfed in a galaxy of red spots and he was reaching out, grabbing the boy by the scruff of the neck and turning the struggling form across his knee.

He remembered the intense satisfaction he got out of hearing the muted whack of his hand against the boy's rump.

He remembered the strong hands that pulled him away. And after that the uniformed men who seized him and hustled him into a vehicle which carried him to police headquarters, where they questioned him briefly and threw him in a barred room. threw him in a room with barred windows.

Rowland estimated the cell to be about ten feet wide and twelve feet deep. It contained a cot, a chair, and a piece of furniture that might pass for a combination desk and table.

He'd been there a little over an hour when a uniformed man came to the cell and informed him he had visitors. The man opened the cell door and ushered him through a corridor and into an office-like room with hard-backed chairs and oak tables.

The visitors were his Sister, and a young man whom he recognized immediately as Bill Nelson.

For just a moment a good feeling spread over him at the thought that Bill and Alice were together again. Then it occured to him that since Bill Nelson was a lawyer, he was probably here in an official capacity.

He was.

After making sure Alice was comfortably seated, Bill

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Nelson drew Rowland to the opposite end of the room and asked: "What's wrong, Ted?"

"Didn't they tell you?"

Bill Nelson shook his head. "The school called Alice; she called me; and we came right down."

"I'm in trouble, Bill—bad trouble."

"Oh? One of the students?"

"That's right."

"Well, don't worry too much about it, Ted. If it's a simple case of unwarranted authority, I'm reasonably sure I can get you off with a ninety-day suspended sentence."

"I'm afraid it's worse than that, Bill."

"Worse? You didn't *shout* at the child, I hope?"

Rowland was watching his face while he spoke. He had a sincere manner about him that seemed to imply genuine sympathy and concern.

"No," he said evenly. "I didn't shout at him. All I did was whale the hell out of him."

Bill Nelson's mouth dropped open, remained that way for five full seconds, then snapped shut with the abruptness of a sprung bear trap.

"We'll plead insanity!" he said suddenly. "That's what we'll do. May'be the S.S.C. will accept a plea of mental incompetence!"

Rowland's face darkened. "The S.S.C.?. Do you mean that the Supreme Student Council will be assigned to *this* case?"

The lawyer moved his shoulders. "I imagine they will be. Can't rightly say for sure, for course, since no one's ever been on trial before for striking a student. But considering the ninety year jail term that the law prescribes for a felony of this type, I'd expect that the highest Student governing body in the land will be assigned to your case."

"But why a Student Council? Can't you get me tried in an adult court?"

"Uh-uh! Can't do it, Ted. The law is very precise on that point. Article 84, Paragraph 4, of the Educational Doctrine states that any alleged violations of the Doctrine involving a Student shall be tried by a Student Body."

"How about my rights?"

"You don't have any, Ted. By this time tomorrow, every newspaper in the country will be carrying your picture on the front page. All we'd have to do would be to appeal to have this tried in an adult court and every Student Organization, in the world would scream that they were being purged by adult authority."

"But what about me? How about the rule of a bunch of wet-eared kids being foisted on me?"

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"The Supreme Student Council is fair, Ted. They're the best in the business. They were picked for that job because they're above petty vindictiveness. Every one of the SSC's are over twelve years old, and a few of them are fifteen."

Rowland drummed his fingers on the table. "Tell me, Bill," he said seriously. "Do you think a dozen kids are qualified to judge whether or not I spend the next ninety years behind bars?"

The lawyer dropped his eyes. "You want my advice, Ted?" Rowland nodded.

"Do what I tell you then, Ted. Plead insanity. It's the only chance you've got."

The next morning, two of Bill Nelson's predictions came to pass. First: Ted's picture was on the front page of every newspaper in the country; and second: He was officially informed that his case would be tried before the Supreme Student Council.

He received the news stoically while sitting on the edge of his cot. He'd been refused bail for his own protection, he was told. Moreover, twice during the night, he'd been awakened by a commotion at the end of the corridor, that in his half-wakened state, he'd believed to be a lynch mob. However, upon awakening, the attendant informed him that they were merely newspaper reporters clamoring for an interview.

One thing was for certain. He was news—big news. Of all the thousands of cases involving unwarranted authority that had been tried in the courts; never in the history of Progressive Education had a teacher raised a hand to a student.

Not until now.

The morning newspapers, for the most part, contented themselves with simple three-inch headlines and a brief reporting of the facts. It wasn't until the afternoon editions hit the street that editorial writers began to be swayed by public opinion. One of these suggested that in addition to the ninety-year jail sentence, a public flogging might not be out of order for Ted Rowland.

To make matters worse, The National Association for the Suppression of Unwarranted Authority had bought a full-page ad in every Metropolitan newspaper.

The masthead of the page was in four inch caps. It said: "SUPPOSE THIS WERE YOUR CHILD?"

Below it was a three-quarter-page splash-panel that depicted a hideous-looking caricature of Ted Rowland, grinning sadistically while he beat with balled fists on a cringing, kneeling child while he begged for mercy.

Later, Bill Nelson arrived with a bundle of the vicious

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news-print. And this time Rowland was not permitted to confer with his attorney in the anteroom. Instead, Nelson was admitted to the cell block where he sank wearily on the cot.

"It looks bad, Ted", he said. These newspapers have us in a vise and they're squeezing."

"I know, Bill. So what do we do?"

"Do? Why there's only one thing we can do. Plead insanity. Throw yourself on the SSC."

"But I'm not insane! That Davis kid deserved what he got. I didn't hit him hard, and that paddling probably did him more good than five years of so-called progressive education."

"I agree with you, Ted. I know that and you know that. But try selling it to a bunch of parents who were raised on the same namby-pamby methods they expect you to use on their spoiled brats. Try selling it to them and see how far you get — especially with the NASUA buying space in every paper in America!"

"When is the trial, Bill?"

"It's tentatively set for a week from Tuesday. But I believe I could get us an extension."

"No," Rowland said quickly, "no extensions. Let's get it over with.

The lawyer nodded. "Alright, Ted. Might be better that way. A quick trial without too much preparation might strengthen the insanity motive."

Four days before the trial, a well-coached Stephen Davis made an appearance on television and told in a trembling voice "how Mr. Rowland beat him about forty times with his fists, because I didn't know my lesson". A day later, a small group of individuals—mostly teachers —had started a fund in his behalf. And the evening before the trial a larger group assembled around the jail screaming: "Lynch Rowland", and had to be broken up by the police.

Because of the tremendous public interest, a large auditorium had been secured for the trial. And in addition to world-wide newspaper coverage, the event was to be broadcast over eight separate TV networks.

A terrible hush fell over the six-thousand spectators when Rowland flanked, by an even two-dozen guards, was led into the hall and hustled through a solid wall of smouldering humanity to the dais where the Student Judge and his twelve members of the Student Council sat waiting.

Climbing the platform, Ted had the awful feeling that he was climbing onto the target area of an immense microscope slide. There were *eyes* —some of them in the audi-

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ence, but most of them behind the sixteen TV cameras—following him, recording every movement, witnessing his nervousness.

Bill Nelson touched his arm then, and a youth whose voice had just begun to change began calling the court to order.

After that, Judge Jimmy Hager, an intelligent-looking lad with straight black hair and high checkbones gave his instructions to the audience and reports. Judge Hager, according to the newspapers, was sixteen years old, and an honor student at Albert Einstein High School.

While Judge Hager was speaking, Rowland allowed his eyes to go over the twelve members of the Student Council. The boys ranged from twelve to fifteen years of age and sat emotionless around a horseshoe shaped tier of benches arranged around the Judge's platform.

Except for the fact that they were immaculately dressed, any one of the boys might have been neighborhood children who played in the local softball league, or swam at Jones Beach, or stomped up his Sister's rosebushes.

Sitting there in the hard-backed chair, Rowland tried to think of them as the neighbors' children. But the deception refused to stick. Underneath their milk-white skin and youthful appearance, there was a subtle hardness. Maybe it came from too much authority. Or maybe it came from too little experience. Whatever it was, it was there. Rowland could feel it each time one of the boys happened to glance in his direction.

Judge Hager completed his instructions, rapped the gavel, and ordered the first witness—a troublesome youth who sat near Stephen Davis—to the stand.

Ted Rowland listened, while in a shaking voice, the boy told how Stephan Davis had always been a model student. And how, "for no reason at all, Mr. Rowland had beat on him with a *stick*." The boy laid heavy emphasis on the last two words while flurry of excitement rippled through the audience at the introduction of this factor.

Ted Rowland leaned over toward his attorney. "How about Ralph Sparks?" he whispered. "Surely the classroom attendent would know what really happened and testify in my behalf."

Bill Nelson shook his head. "I've already asked him. He won't become involved. Claims he's got kids of his own and can't afford to buck all this public opinion."

Judge Hager rapped the gravel.

Another well-coached witness came to the stand.

Then Judge Hager ordered Stephen Davis to the witness stand.

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A cold, white silence fell over the assembly as a well-scrubbed and pensive-looking Stephen Davis limped to the witness stand and in answer to the prosecuting attorney's obvious opening question announced that: "He hadn't been able to walk right since Mr. Rowland had beat him".

More questions followed: "How many times did Mr. Rowland strike you? ...Did you do anything to make him angry? ...How do you feel since Mr. Rowland administered the beating?"

And white-faced, and oddly well-behaved, Stephen Davis answered the questions: "Mr. Rowland beat me about forty times, Sir...I can't think of anything I might have done to make him angry, Sir. Unless he was mad because I didn't know my lesson"....And: Ever since Mr. Rowland beat me, I've had trouble walking, Sir."

Bill Nelson leaned over and touched Rowland on the arm. "It's even worse than I thought," he whispered "Our only chance now is a plea for insanity. And all these lies and false evidence will serve to strengthen our case. That's why I haven't objected or interrupted the proceedings. Now listen closely, as soon as the prosecuting attorney is finished, I'll reach up and scratch my ear. That'll be the signal...You jump up, scream that the boy is a liar and threaten to whale the tar out of him...Now make it dramatic! Don't worry about hurting him. The court attendants will stop you before you get to him. And while everything's in a state of confusion I'll drop in an insanity plea ...Got it?"

"I've got it."

"Your witness," the fifteen-year-old prosecuting attorney said and did a standing broad-jump off the dais.

Bill Nelson got up and climbed to where Stephen Davis sat. The TV cameras and mike followed him like hovering buzzards.

"Tell me, Stephen," the lawyer said confidentially. "Isn't it true that you knocked over a motion picture projector and kicked Mr. Rowland when he stooped over to retrieve it?"

Stephen Davis' wide blue eyes looked up in injured innocence.

"No Sir," he lied. "That's not true at all. Mr. Rowland beat me because I didn't know my lesson."

Bill Nelson leaned toward the boy casually. "Did anyone ever tell you, Stephen, that it's a sin to lie?"

"I object!" the fifteen-year-old prosecuting attorney piped-up shrilly. "Mr. Nelson is browbeating the witness!"

"Sustained," the sixteen-year-old Judge intoned.

Nelson tried a fresh approach. "Tell me," he said, "what were your exact words just prior to the time that Mr.

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Rowland allegedly beat you?"

The boy fidgeted in the chair, glanced into the three rows of NASUA officials, then back to the lawyer.

"Mr. Rowland gave us a problem in arithmetic," he said. "When I told him I didn't understand he beat me."

Ted Rowland felt his blood pressure begin to rise.

Bill Nelson casually tugged on the lobe of his ear.

Rowland was aware of rising to his feet and walking slowly to where his lawyer stood at the boy's elbow.

The hiss of whispering that rose out of the spectators swelled in seconds to the roar of an angry mob.

The guards tensed.

Three feet from where the boy sat, Rowland stopped. So did the guards—w a i t i n g. Rowland opened his mouth to speak but the words seemed to stick in his throat.

Bill Nelson shot him a sharp, unmistakable glance that said: "You waited too long, Ted...It w o u l d n't be spontaneous now..."

Again the impulse to call Stephen Davis the liar he was churned in his throat. And again he fought it back. Impulsively, he turned to the Judge and said: "Please, your honor, may I have permission to cross-examine the boy myself?"

"I object!"

Rowland turned. The objection had come not in the high pitched voice of the prosecuting attorney but in the mature tone of Bill Nelson.

"Surely my client's outburst is evidence enough that he is in an extremely precarious state," Bill Nelson said rhetorically..."I was just about to enter a plea of—"

"Oh no you didn't!" Rowland interrupted. "I don't wish to plead insanity for the simple reason that I'm not insane. It's true that I struck the boy, but I believe there are extenuating circumstances that could be best brought out if I were allowed to cross examine Mr. Davis myself."

Judge Jimmy Hager looked over to the Student Council.

Two of them nodded their heads.

"I object!" Bill Nelson screamed.

Rowland directed his gaze at the lawyer. "Look, Bill," he said carefully, "I like you and I'm sure that in a legitimate court of law you'd be a fine lawyer. But everyone to his own game. Let's face it, I've had lots more experience dealing with children than you have. So be a sport."

Nelson's mouth dropped open. "I don't understand."

R o w l a n d took a deep breath. "I'll make it as plain as I can, Bill," he said evenly. "You're fired—as of now!"

Judge Hager rapped the gavel again. "Objection overruled," he said. "The defendant may cross-examine."

"Thank you, Your Honor," Rowland said and climbed

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up on the dais where Stephen Davis met his gaze unflinchingly. For several seconds he paced up and down as if searching for words. Then he said: "Mr. Davis, will you please tell the court the name that you shouted at me just before I paddled you in the classroom?"

The boy's eyebrows went up in mock-surprise. "Name," Mr. Rowland? I didn't call you any name."

From somewhere in the audience a voice said: "Stand your ground, Kid! Don't let him bully you!"

Rowland swallowed hard. "Think hard, Stephen. You called me a name. Not once but several times that day and also on other days previously to that?"

Stephen Davis met his stare. "No I didn't, Mr. Rowland. You're just making that up."

"Very well, Stephen. Let me ask you something else, then. How much did you get from International Telecast Studios for making a public appearance?"

"I object!" the prosecuting attorney said.

"Sustained," the Judge echoed.

Rowland began to pace the dias again. There'd been rumors that the boy cashed in on a fat TV contract. What's more they were undoubtably true. The boy was a born actor. He was proving it by not muffing a line in the greatest drama in his young life.

"Tell me," Rowland said suddenly. "What will you gain if I should go to jail for the next ninety years?"

The boy was silent for a long time. Finally he said: "You beat me, Mr. Rowland. You made me appear ridiculous before my class mates and probably gave me a complex which I'll have for the rest of my life. I think you *should* go to jail so you can't hurt any other children the same way."

A rumble of approval went through the audience.

Rowland glanced at Bill Nelson who was regarding the proceedings stoically and thought of the old bromide about the man who acts as his own lawyer. Without looking at the boy he said: "Who told you to say that, Stephen?"

Stephen Davis glanced at the NASAU officials and said "No one told me, Mr. Rowland. That's just what I think."

"Are you sure, Stephen?"

"Yes, Sir. I'm sure."

Deliberately, Rowland stared up into the youthful faces of the twelve members of the Student Council. Without taking his eyes from the horseshoe-shaped tier of benches, he said: "I didn't think any member of the Student Council could have prompted you, Stephen. Especially since I talked to

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them last night and they agreed with me that you were nothing but a big liar."

He spaced the words carefully so that the roar from the astounded spectators was loud enough to drown out the cries of protest from the stunned Council members.

Taking advantage of the confusion, Rowland leaned forward till his face was only inches away from the triangular eyebrows.

"They know you're a liar," he repeated with dreadful clarity. "They told me so."

The boy's face began to redden and white showed under his knuckles as he gripped the chair-arms.

Finally, Judge Hager thought to rap the gavel and grim-faced guards began to close in on the tiered dais.

Simultaneously Stephen Davis' lips moved and his voice was a lethal whisper. "The Student Council is stupid!" he hissed.

"They're not," Rowland interjected quickly.

"They are!" the boy screamed. "They're stupid and you're stupid. I told you that before and I'll tell you again... You're stupid... stupid...stupid!"

Stephen Davis was on his feet then, lunging past Ted to the horseshoe-shaped row of benches where the juvenile jury watched the outburst in stunned silence.

There was a flash of a well-polished shoe as Stephen Davis aimed a vicious kick at a fourteen-year-old council member, followed by the sudden melee of the council members trying to protect their anatomy and dignity at the same time. But it was all in vain. Seconds before the guards reached the frantic boy, a thirteen-year-old honor student had laid him out with a beautifully neat cross to the jaw.

It was twenty minutes before order was restored in the court-room. Then Judge Hager who'd been in a hasty conference with the Student Council rapped his gavel.

"The court, upon the unanimous vote of the Student Council," he said, "finds the defendant "not guilty".. Furthermore, we have agreed that if at any future date any of the officers of this court-room should become unruly enough to warrant it; we would heartily endorse the therapy used by Mr. Rowland as being beneficial, not only to the student body, but to mankind in general..."

As he started to leave amid the lightning flashes of newspaper cameras, Bill stopped him at the door.

"Congratulations, Ted," the lawyer said. "Looks like you're a better lawyer than I am."

Rowland shook his head. "Not a better lawyer, Bill. Let's just say I know kids better than you do.

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—Continued from other side

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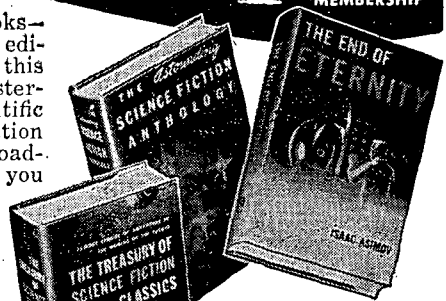

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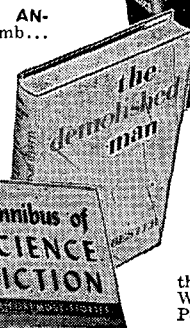

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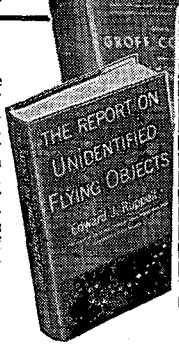

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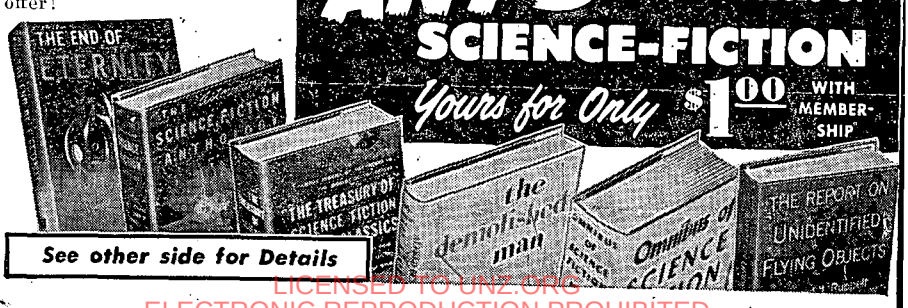
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